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ISSUE 234 SEPTEMBER 2025 £5.75

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THE REAL DOWNTON ABBEY
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- Trace your Channel Island roots
- Save £££s with this Ancestry tip
- Tyne & Wear family history guide

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VJ DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY 1945 - 2025

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- ✓ **Awards for gallantry**
- ✓ **War medals**
- ✓ **Military promotions**

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www.thegazette.co.uk/vjday80

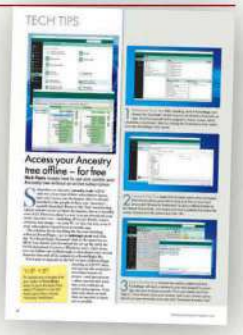
The Gazette is the UK's official public record dating back to 1665 and holds millions of notices which can help you learn more about your ancestors.

The Gazette is on

Welcome

Sarah's Top Tip

Use RootsMagic to download all of the records on your Ancestry family tree



I used to have a folder on my laptop with key records from my Ancestry tree. My reasoning was that if I ever stopped subscribing, I would still be able to see all the census records and more that I had amassed over the years. But that really wasn't practical, and I eventually gave up. Recently, Ancestry has launched an option for those who don't want a full subscription but still want to access records they have already attached to their tree. It's only £3 a month, so not bad value, but if you follow our tutorial on **page 54** you can keep access to the records for free. What's not to love?

My grandmother's sister, with her three young children, fled Singapore by flying boat in January 1942, just before it fell to the Japanese. Her husband was left behind, but survived the horrors of Changi. Their experience was so different to what we think of when we imagine the Second World War, but it's important not to forget the many thousands of people who were caught up in the fight against Japan. On **page 14** we look at the actions that led to VJ Day and what records you can find to research family who fought.

On a happier note, I loved Lauren Potts' account of researching her childhood house (**page 19**). My equivalent would be my grandparents' house where we spent all our holidays. Her article has prompted me to see what I can find out about it. I was also inspired this month by Emma Cox's introduction to the blogging platform Substack (**page 22**). I must admit that it's not something I had explored for genealogy before, but after talking to her on her *Journeys into Genealogy* podcast, I was won over. Check it out!

Throughout this issue we flag up new online resources, from our 'News' pages (**page 10**) to our article on Channel Island ancestors (**page 30**) that celebrates the new Findmypast Guernsey collection. Do share any discoveries you find in these records. Happy hunting!

Sarah

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Contributors

Phil Tomaselli
A regular contributor to the magazine, Phil has been sharing his military know-how with our readers for years. On **page 14** he tells the story of VJ Day, 80 years on.

Lauren Potts
Lauren is a writer with a passion for family history. On **page 19** she explains how she used her genealogy skills to research the history of her beloved childhood home.

Emma Cox
Emma is the host of the popular podcast *Journeys into Genealogy* (**journeysintogenealogy.co.uk**) and a big fan of Substack. See what this blogging platform has to offer on **page 22**.

COVER IMAGE: GETTY IMAGES/CROWDS IN ALBERT SQUARE, MANCHESTER, CELEBRATE THE END OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR, 15 AUGUST 1945

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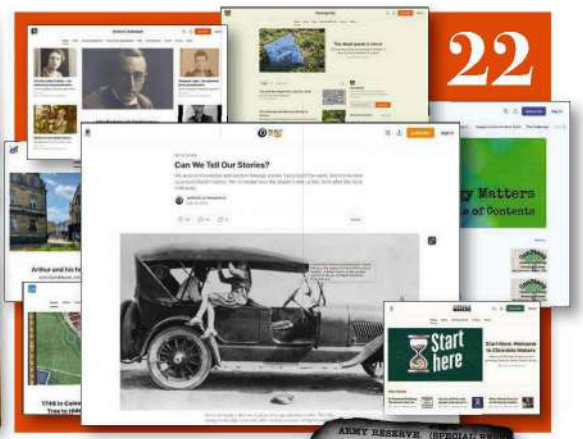

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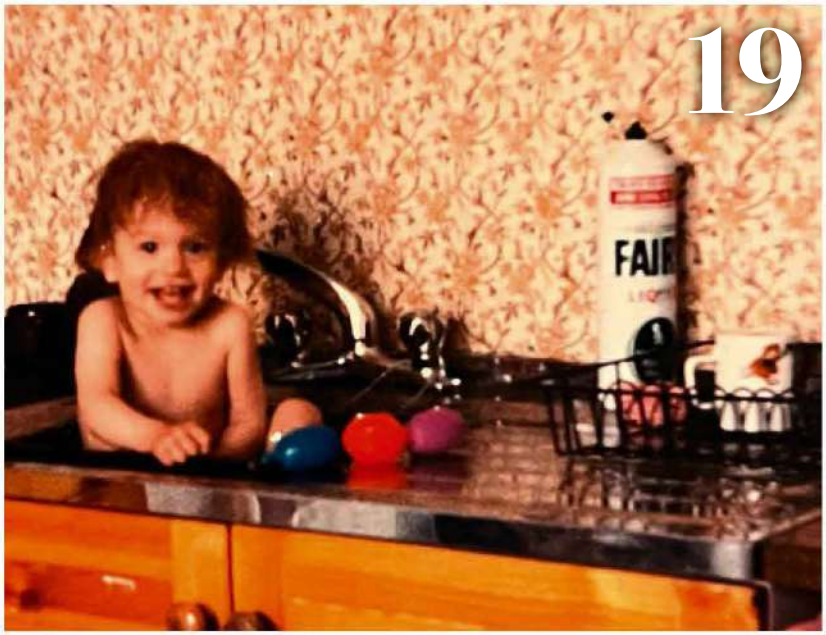

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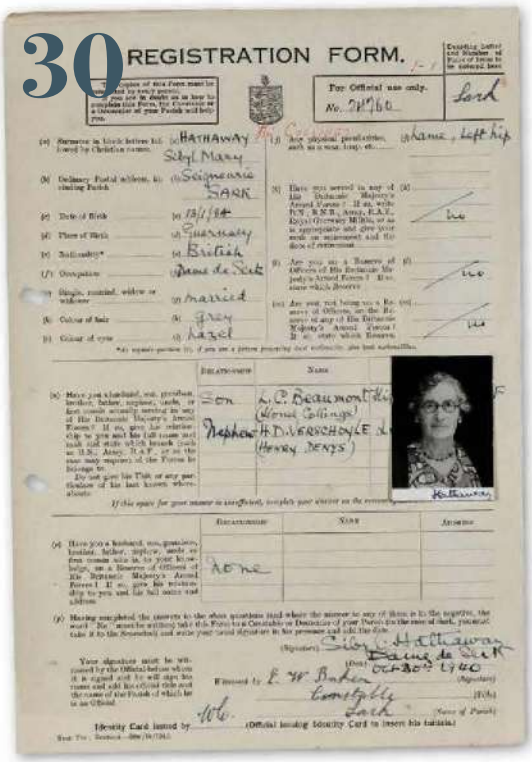

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Letters

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Write to *WDYTYA? Magazine*, Eagle House, Bristol BS1 4ST

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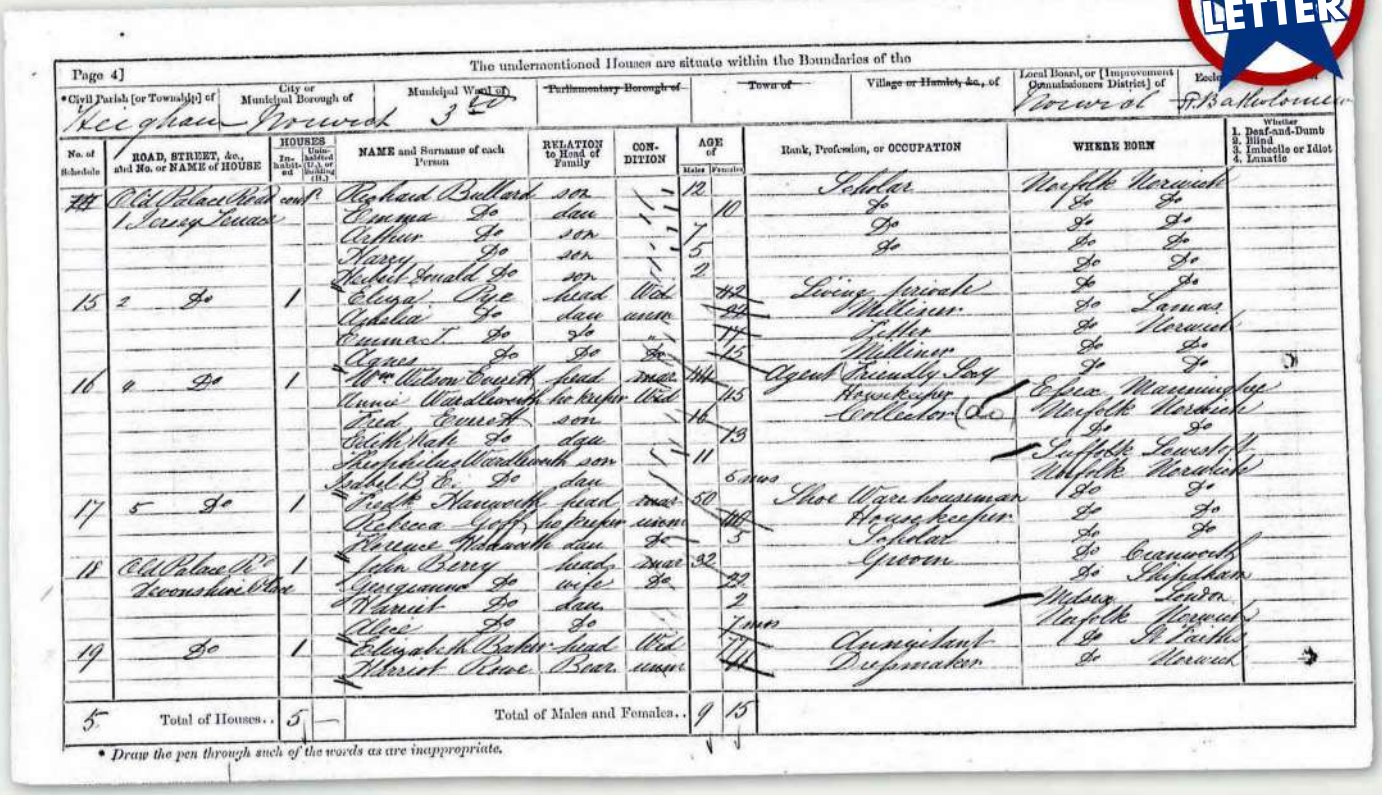
Family Naming Traditions

STAR LETTER



Page 4] The undermentioned Houses are situate within the Boundaries of the

No. of Schedule	ROAD, STREET, &c., and No. or NAME of HOUSE	NAME and Surname of each Person	RELATION to Head of Family	CONDITION	AGE Males	AGE Females	Rank, Profession, or OCCUPATION	WHERE BORN	Whether 1. Deaf-and-Dumb 2. Blind 3. Imbecile or Idiot 4. Lunatic
14	Old Palace Road	Richard Bullard	son		12		Scholar	Norfolk Norwich	
	1 Young Terrace	Emma do	dau			10	do	do do	
		Arthur do	son		7		do	do do	
		Harry do	son		5		do	do do	
		Ethel Gerald do	son		2			do do	
15	2 do	1 Eliza Rye	head	Wid		42	Lace finisher	do do	
		Ophelia do	dau	unm		24	Milliner	do Jamaica	
		Emma J. do	do			14	Scholar	do Norwich	
		Agnes do	do	do		15	Milliner	do do	
16	2 do	1 Wm Wilson Everett	head	mar	44		Agent Friendly Soc	do do	
		Annie Wardleworth	housekeeper	Wid		45	Housekeeper	Essex Maningtree	
		Fred Ernest do	son		16		Collector (Co)	Norfolk Norwich	
		Edith Kate do	dau			13		do	
		Theophilus Wardleworth	son		11			Suffolk Lowestoft	
		Isabel B. do	dau			6 mos		Norfolk Norwich	
17	5 do	1 Frank Hancock	head	mar	50		Shoe Warehousman	do do	
		Rebecca Goff	housekeeper	unm		44	Housekeeper	do do	
		Bertie Wardleworth	dau	do		5	Scholar	do do	
18	Old Palace Rd	1 John Berry	head	mar	32		Groom	do Cranworth	
	Devonshire Place	Gertrude do	wife	do		32		do Shipdham	
		Harriet do	dau			2		Middx London	
		Alice do	do			1 mo		Norfolk Norwich	
19	do	1 Elizabeth Baker	head	Wid		74	Assistant	do St Faiths	
		Harriet Rose	Boarder	unm		44	Dressmaker	do Norwich	
5	Total of Houses..	5	Total of Males and Females..		9	15			

* Draw the pen through such of the words as are inappropriate.

The 1871 census shows Annie living with William Everett, her son Theo and baby Isabelle

I am writing in connection with Sarah Williams' article "What's in a Name" in the July issue of the magazine.

My great great grandmother, Ann Rogers Wardleworth née Bell, was widowed in 1860 at the age of 36, but subsequently gave birth to two more children.

The first was born in September 1863, and named Edward William Bishop Wardleworth. I believe the father of this child was Rev. William Bishop, who was married with eight children.

He was also both chaplain of Heigham Hall Retreat, where Ann's husband Thomas Hatton Wardleworth had died in September 1860, and the curate at Heigham parish church where Ann had baptised the last child she had with her husband. Sadly, baby Edward died a year later.

The second child was a daughter born in October 1870 who was named Isabelle Blanche Everett Wardleworth, but always known as Blanche. Her father's identity is confirmed in the 1871 census where Annie Wardleworth is housekeeper to William Wilson Everett, a friendly-society agent.

I believe her first name Isabelle is a pun that she "is a Bell", her mother's maiden name. Even her second name Blanche, meaning 'white', could be construed to mean that she is pure and not responsible for her illegitimacy.

As is mentioned in the article, surnames used as middle names are often the mother's maiden name. It is certainly true in the case of Ann, because Rogers was Annie's mother's maiden name, but also 'Ann Rogers' together was Annie's mother's full name, just as 'Thomas Hatton Wardleworth' was the full name of his father, whose mother's maiden name was Hatton. Annie and Thomas' eldest son was John Bell Wardleworth – yes, Bell was Annie's maiden name, but 'John Bell' together was her father's full name.

Annie had a sister called Rebecca Pakes Bell, 'Rebecca Pakes' being the name of her mother's sister-in-law who died tragically young. Annie and Thomas's third child was called Arthur Forman Wardleworth, and I haven't worked that one out yet! I may be looking for an earlier ancestor with the surname Forman, or an individual called Arthur Forman – he may be an ancestor, or some sort of hero or benefactor. There is sure to be a reason for it.

Sue Castle-Henry, Kings Langley

Editor Replies **Thank you for sharing this family's naming tradition Sue, I can see how that could help confirm connections. I hope that you uncover a link to an Arthur Forman. I love the 'Isabelle' play on words.**

Burial Registers Are At Risk

Across Britain, burial registers – often kept in council basements or disused chapels – are quietly disappearing, lost to damp, neglect or disposal. Unlike birth and death records, there is no statutory duty to preserve these vital documents. Without them, families cannot trace ancestors, coroners cannot confirm burials, and developers risk disturbing unmarked graves. Recent cases in Powys, Kent and Devon reveal serious archival gaps, and damage that cannot be undone.

Britain lacks a central archive for burial data, and many local authorities neither have the resources nor the legal obligation to safeguard these records. At a time when public interest in ancestry is at an all-time high, the raw material of family history is vanishing. A national audit, emergency digitisation funding, and a statutory duty for local councils to preserve burial records are urgently needed. This is not nostalgia – it is a matter of civic dignity.

Antony David Davies, Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts, Shrewsbury

Editor Replies **Thank you for sharing your concerns Antony. This is an important matter and we plan to follow this up with you, The National Archives and other interested parties. If anyone knows of any burial registers that they feel are at risk or have anything to add to this matter, please write to us so that we can coordinate a campaign.**

ChatGPT Is Not Revolutionary

Debbie Kennett's article "Join the AI Revolution" in the July issue provided a valuable update on the uses for family historians of the fast-evolving AI, and I would not presume to dispute any of the applications that she mentions, nor her reservations about some of them. AI is certainly a helpful additional tool that we can use, but it is not, as the headline implies, or ChatGPT itself claims in the first paragraph, anywhere near a "revolution".

DNA can reasonably be described as revolutionary, since it enables us to discover facts that do not exist in documentary evidence. AI in many instances just enables available information to be more quickly accessed; it also improves and speeds up existing peripheral tools such as colourisation, but it is well behind the average family historian in terms of core research skills. One example illustrates this.

Recently I compiled a dossier of facts about Arthur Tisdall VC for a proposal that he should have a 'blue plaque' on the house where he lived; he was born in India but lived in Bedford for the last 15 years of his tragically short life before being killed at Gallipoli in 1915. One of my arguments, based on online research, was that he was one of only two people in Bedfordshire to be awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War. Before I finalised the dossier, I decided check with ChatGPT the accuracy of my claim. Its answer surprised me: only one VC recipient in Bedfordshire, not Arthur Tisdall! How come I knew more than ChatGPT with millions of records at its disposal, including four memorials, all available online, a lengthy Wikipedia article and other detailed accounts online, for example on the website of Bedford School (**www.bedfordschool.org.uk**) where he was a pupil?

This photograph of Arthur Tisdall was published in a newspaper

Of course I can't be certain of the answer, but I suspect it is because ChatGPT did not, as almost every family history researcher would do, check the census returns. Arthur appears twice, in 1901 and 1911. The rest of the online documentation, although detailed, does not specifically mention Bedford.

The Wikipedia article mentions that he attended Bedford School. For any human researcher, that would suggest that he probably lived in Bedfordshire. Certainly, it is something that a human researcher would check.

ChatGPT still has much to learn. Its statement in the article that it is "revolutionizing how data is discovered, organised, and interpreted" is a considerable exaggeration, so far anyway. It has its uses, along with other helpful tools, but like them it must be used with care and caution. Tempting shortcuts, such as accepting the information in other people's online family trees, can end in disaster. Readers of *WDYTYA? Magazine* should not be tempted by the siren songs of AI, but should continue to navigate the tricky waters of family history research using well-tried and proven methods.

Derek Turner, by email

Editor Replies **Yes, we need to be cautious before trusting AI tools – they have a way of giving answers that sound very authoritative. It is worth knowing that ChatGPT can't access data behind a paywall, or records on FamilySearch (familysearch.org) where you need to have registered to view them.**

Sandra Ridley responded to our asking if anyone has a Wren in their family tree (tinyurl.com/wdytya-wrens)
Yes, my mum! Raised in an Aldersbrook scattered home, worked in private service for 15 years from leaving school until serving with the WRNS 1941–1946. Became a petty officer Wren cook, which stood her in good stead, careerwise, when widowed with three girls under the age of 11. Respect, Mum…

Answer Addition

In response to the question posed by Carolyn Johnston ('Q&A', July), I wanted to add a tip to Phil Tomaselli's answer. For anyone researching Far East prisoners ▶

of war, the website of the charity COFEPOW (the Children, Families and Friends of Far East Prisoners of War) is a good starting point: **cofepow.org.uk**.

The association also has experts who will help research a relative, and will put you in touch with other experts too.

However, and I am no expert, the fact that Sergeant Donaldson was captured in 1943 suggests that he went out to the Far East much later than those captured at the Fall of Singapore who were imprisoned at Changi, like my father-in-law was.

Anne Peters, by email

Editor Replies **Thank you for sharing this Anne. My father's cousin Mary Harris has been involved with COFEPOW for many years (her father was in Changi), and has found it very helpful and supportive.**

Nominative Determinism

Further to Sarah Williams' article about forenames in the July issue, attached is a photograph that may of interest. It shows the gravestone of my great grandfather Maydwell Ousley Seward, buried here in Everton, Bedfordshire, in 1929.

I do not know if Maydwell's chosen name was due to a robust constitution evident at birth, or if it was wishful thinking on the part of his parents. Whatever the reason, Maydwell certainly lived up to his name and went on to live for over 95 years. This in an era when medical aids and interventions were nothing like what is available today.

Ben Seward, Everton

The gravestone of Ben's long-lived great grandfather Maydwell Ousley Seward

Editor Replies **Living to 95 even now is an achievement. He was certainly made well!**

How To Improve Your Number-Plate Nous

Having developed an interest in the history of motoring, encouraged by my late father who started motoring in 1925, I enjoyed Simon Fowler's article in the July issue "A Revolution on the Road". However, I would like to make a contribution to his list of recommended resources.

Old-car enthusiasts would suggest a much more user-friendly site than the mentioned Wikipedia page for number-plate codes, namely **oldclassiccar.co.uk/registrations/reg-letters.htm**.

If you have an old photo that includes a vehicle registration, it will help narrow down when it was taken. For example, referring to the photograph of the Rover EPC 613 involved in a serious road accident, you will find that Surrey County Council issued this registration in 1936.

If you need additional help identifying the car in question, you can ask a car historian, such as myself, or try the forum at **practically-classics.co.uk/forum** where you can ask questions in the 'General Chat' section.

John Hunter, by email

Editor Replies **Many thanks for sharing these handy online resources John. I'm sure we must have plenty of readers who own old photographs that include family cars.**

@clairehistory.bsky.social celebrated Ancestry's addition of millions of Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire records (see page 11)

This is great news for people with family history in these counties. I may be busy for some time…

YOUR LETTER IN PRINT We reserve the right to edit any letters sent to the magazine. Messages posted to our Facebook wall and tweets sent to us may also appear in print. The choice of Star Letter is the editor's and the prize is subject to change.

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What's On

Email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk* to feature your event here for free

PICK OF THE MONTH

Learn how to trace 'ag labs' with this online event

Sowing The Seeds Of History – Exploring The Lives Of Agricultural Labourers

30 August
w **portal.sog.org.uk/Event/view/1019888**

Land Girls working on a farm in 1916

'Ag lab' ancestors have a reputation for being dull and hard to research, but this day of talks from the Society of Genealogists will help you uncover agricultural forebears and their contribution to British history. The topics are 'The Organisation of Women's Agricultural Responses During Conflict' (Nicky Reynolds), 'Ag Lab Case Study – Awliscombe, Devon' (Robert Mawditt), 'How Agriculture Saved the Nation in WW1' (Cynthia Brown), 'The Weird & Wonderful Lives of Victorian Agricultural Labourers' (Gary Allanach), 'Dry Stone Walls – Defining the Landscape of Northern Upland Britain' (Jude Rhodes), 'From Sussex Ox to Fordson Major' (Ian Everest) and 'Resources for Filling in Agricultural Labourers' Lives' (Janet Few). £75, or £60 for members.

IN PERSON

Our River Thames

Until 29 August
a **Royal Berkshire Archives, Reading**
t 0118 937 5132
w **royalberkshirearchives.org.uk/news/article/our-river-thames-exhibition-now-open**
You can find out about the people of Berkshire's relationship with the Thames throughout history with this exhibition. Free.

The Panacea Society And The Second World War

Until 21 September
a **Panacea Museum, Bedford**
t 01234 353178
w **panaceamuseum.org/events/the-panacea-society-and-the-second-world-war**
This exhibition will look at the role of the Panacea Society, which believed in the teachings of the 18th-century prophet Joanna Southcott, during the Second World War. Free.

Shakespeare In London

Until 2 October
a **The London Archives**
t 020 7332 3820
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-tla-shake**
This exhibition offers a rare chance to see a 1613 title deed that is one of just six documents with Shakespeare's signature, and the Civitas Londinium map, one of the earliest existing maps of London. Free.

VJ Day Anniversary Lunch And Talk

14 August
a **Centre for Heritage & Family History, Reading**
e *booking@berksfhs.org.uk*
w **tinyurl.com/berksfhs-vj**
Berkshire Family History Society will mark the 80th anniversary of VJ Day with a lunch of fish and chips, followed by a talk by Dr Richard Marks on 'Over the Kwai: The Story of the Burma-Siam Railway in World War 2'. £12.

Doncaster And District Family History Society Fair

16 August
a **Corn Exchange, Doncaster**
e *honsecretary@doncasterfhs.co.uk*
w **doncasterfhs.co.uk/ddfhs-fair/**
This fair to celebrate the society's 45th anniversary will feature stalls, consultation sessions with experts, and a raffle. Free.

FHF Really Useful Family History Show 2025

23 August
a **Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, Belfast**
w **nifhs.org/events/really-useful-family-history-show-2025/**
This North of Ireland Family History Society event will feature stalls, presentations and Belfast entertainer John Linehan being given his own *Who Do You Think You Are?* experience. Free.

Read All About It

28 August
a **Methodist Church, Westbury**
e *westbury@wiltshirefhs.co.uk*
w **wiltshirefhs.co.uk/westbury**
Genealogist Claire Mills will share her tips for newspaper research at this Wiltshire Family History Society event. Free.

How English And Welsh Records Work

7 September
a **Dartford Science and Technology College**
t 01322 527604
w **tinyurl.com/nwkfhs-gand**
Michael Gandy will explain how local-government records are used in family history. Free to North West Kent Family History Society members, non-members asked to make a small donation.

IN PERSON & ONLINE

Searching For Shadrack Byfield

29 August
a **National Army Museum, London**
t 020 7730 0717
w **nam.ac.uk/whats-on/searching-shadrack-byfield**
Researcher Dr Eamonn O'Keeffe will discuss how he tried to trace a disabled veteran of the War of 1812. Free, booking required.

ONLINE

Introduction To House History

5 September
w **tinyurl.com/eventbrite-norf-rec-off-house**
Discover how to investigate the history of your house and its inhabitants with this workshop from Norfolk Record Office. Participants will get a £2 discount on the Advanced House History workshop held next year. Free.

Introduction To One-Name Studies

8 September
w **tinyurl.com/pharos-intro-one-name**
Julie Goucher shares her expect advice for carrying out a study into your surname's past with this five-week online course from Pharos Tutors. £70.

BOOK AHEAD

The *A House Through Time* presenter's live tour visits Bristol

David Olusoga: History's Missing Chapters

29 September
a **St George's Bristol, Great George Street, Bristol**
t 0117 929 4929
w **stgeorgesbristol.co.uk/whats-on/david-olusoga-3/**
Historian, author and TV presenter Prof. David Olusoga will examine some of history's missing chapters to uncover how and why some events and some people are forgotten. From £14.

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News

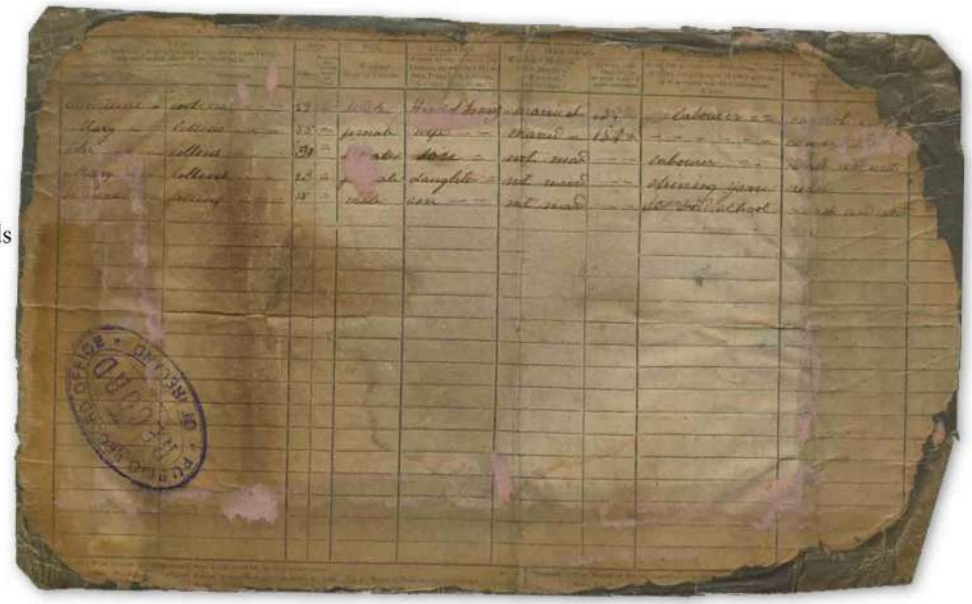
Rosemary Collins reports on the latest data releases and genealogy news

Virtual Record Treasury adds 175,000 Irish records

Some 175,000 historical Irish records, including 60,000 pre-1901 census records previously thought to be lost, have been published online.

On 30 June 1922, the Public Record Office of Ireland in Dublin was destroyed in a fire during the Irish Civil War. Centuries of Irish historical records were lost, including those relating to family history – particularly the census records before 1901.

In 2022, to mark the 100th anniversary of the fire, the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland (VRTI; **virtualtreasury.ie**) was launched – an ambitious attempt to reconstruct the Public Record Office of Ireland with digitised copies of documents from around the world. The website is completely free to use.



A fragment from the 1841 census is one of the records available digitally through the VRTI

On 30 June 2025, to mark its third anniversary, the VRTI announced that it had added a major new collection of records, including the census records.

A spokesperson for the VRTI told *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine* that, although some of the new census records on the VRTI include the census fragments already available on the National Archives of Ireland's website (**nationalarchives.ie**), the majority are new collections, from transcripts and duplicates from archives and other cultural institutions across the island of Ireland and around the world.

The other new additions to the website are:

- The Age of Revolution Portal, with documents covering the 1798 Rebellion and Ireland's links to the American Revolution, including documents from the Library of Congress in America.

- The Age of Conquest Portal, with five million words of Anglo-Norman Irish history (1170–1500) that have been translated into English.

- State Papers Ireland, containing more than 10 million words on governing Ireland in the dramatic years following Oliver Cromwell's death (1660–1720).

- Knowledge Graph Explorer, a tool for identifying people and places, and the connections between them, in the records in the VRTI.

The scale, scope and significance of these materials is remarkable

Dr Peter Crooks of Trinity College Dublin, academic director of the VRTI, said, "We are excited to release our latest collections freely online for citizen researchers, students and the academic community. The scale, scope and significance of these materials is remarkable. They will be of huge interest to anyone exploring Ireland's story as a global island.

"Thousands of names of individuals from before and after the Great Famine; extensive intelligence reports from the Tudor era; and a host of medieval records presented in English alongside the original Latin parchment – these vast and varied collections are a testament to the power of collaboration."

Ireland's minister for culture, communications and sport Patrick O'Donovan added, "The VRTI has enabled local communities and family historians to explore their own histories in new ways, through the freely accessible archival records and innovative technologies. This creative approach, underpinned by academic rigour, allows for new perspectives and a greater understanding of what we thought we knew already."

NEWS IN BRIEF

The 1599 baptism record of Oliver Cromwell is among the material added to Ancestry

Ancestry adds 5.8 million Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire records

Family history website Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) has added nearly 5.8 million Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire parish records covering five centuries. The records, from Cambridgeshire Libraries and Archives, consist of 2,731,359 baptism, marriage and burial records (1538–1812); 1,544,406 baptism records (1813–1924); 1,091,738 banns and marriage records (1754–1950); and 413,911 burial records (1813–1997).

ScotlandsPlaces went offline on 24 June

HES shuts ScotlandsPlaces

Local-history site ScotlandsPlaces (**https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk**) has been closed down. Historic Environment Scotland (HES) said it was closing its "legacy websites", including ScotlandsPlaces, Canmore (which catalogued Scotland's physical heritage) and Scran (which held sound and video recordings), because it could no longer support them securely. ScotlandsPlaces' records were transferred to HES's site **trove.scot**, Scotland's People (**scotlandspeople.gov.uk**) and the National Library of Scotland's websites **nls.uk** and **maps.nls.uk**.

Medical records from 18th-century Edinburgh go online

The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh (RCPE) has launched a free site containing 18th-century medical records.

The People's Dispensary (**rcpe.ac.uk/peoplesdispensary**) holds a set of case notes from the Edinburgh Public Dispensary.

The notes date from its opening in 1776 until 1790. In total, 10,402 pages of records featuring the names of 1,372 patients and 174 practitioners were digitised, accompanied by transcriptions.

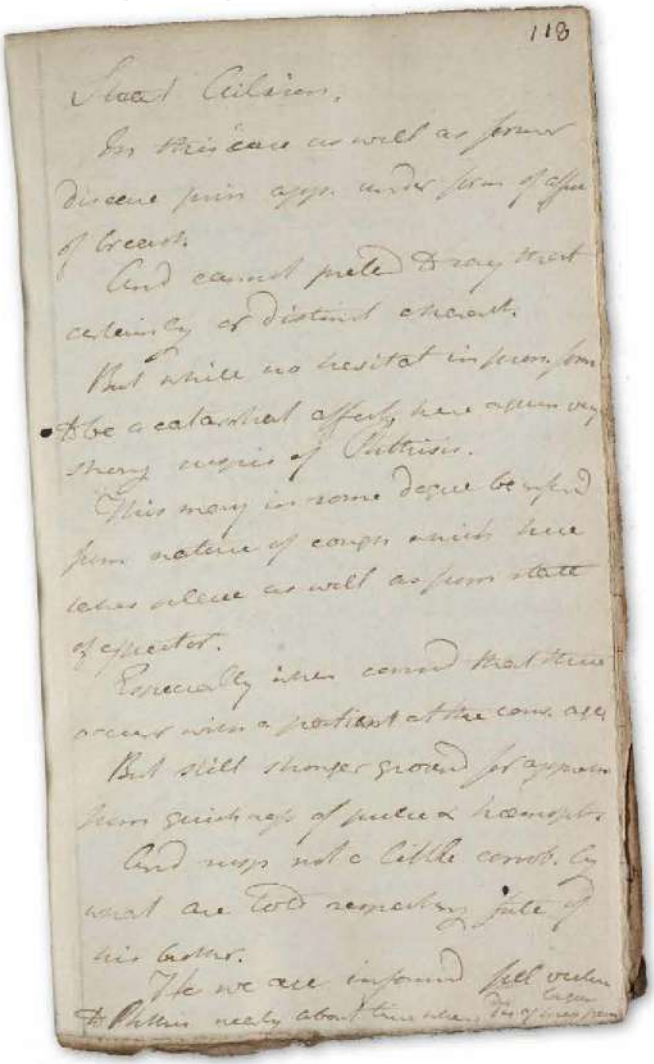
The website also has a glossary of the terms used, and information about Georgian medicine.

The dispensary was opened by Dr Andrew Duncan (1773–1832) to provide free diagnoses and medicine to the city's poor.

The notes can be searched by the names of patients or practitioners, and reveal fascinating glimpses of the lives of ordinary people.

The 1782–1783 case notes for Stuart Ailison, for example, describe him as "at 22 of a brown complexion & brown coloured hair but light eyes, inclining somewhat to corpulence" and "troubled with a hard bound & tickling cough with which he expectorates a white frothy & tough matter in small quantity".

They add that he "was much with a brother who died of Pulmonary consumption in January last".



Stuart Ailison's case notes include revealing details

CAN YOU HELP?

In 1905, a group of about 450 unemployed men marched from Leicester to London with the intention of telling Edward VII about their plight. They didn't succeed in meeting the king, but they were widely reported in the press and inspired the support of the Bishop of Dorking. A new project, carried out by Leicestershire & Rutland Family History Society (**lrfhs.org.uk**) and the Document Media Centre (**heritageco.co.uk**), has been launched to mark the 120th anniversary of the march, and the organisers are keen to hear from descendants of the marchers. Each of the 416 men who returned to Leicester received a medal, which may be among your family heirlooms. If you can help, please email Jess Jenkins on *jess@heritageco.co.uk*. There is a Facebook Group with more details at **facebook.com/groups/3498246820310106?checkpoint_src=any**.

Some of the campaigners

GETTY IMAGES | ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF EDINBURGH | RECORD OFFICE FOR LEICESTERSHIRE, LEICESTER AND RUTLAND

Birmingham was an industrial centre in the 19th century, and became a city in 1889

Birmingham records released by Ancestry

Family history website Ancestry (ancestry.co.uk) has added two major collections of records from Birmingham.

The first consists of petty- and quarter-session records from 1892–1931, with 2,113,702 records altogether.

Petty sessions were court cases that pertained to lesser charges, and didn't require a jury. Quarter sessions were for more serious criminal cases, but also may have included civil business matters.

The different record sets are a rich insight into the criminal-justice system in 19th- and 20th-century Birmingham. As well as court cases, they include bastardy orders, recording the efforts made by mothers of illegitimate children to pursue their offspring's fathers for financial support; minutes of gaol sessions, recording the administration of the prison; and a juvenile court register.

The second collection contains 52,407 records (1845–1931) from the All Saints' Hospital, an asylum.

The *Gazette* creates VJ Day hub

The *Gazette*, the UK's paper of record, has created an online hub to mark the 80th anniversary of VJ (Victory in Japan) Day. The hub, available at **thegazette.co.uk/vjday80**, has resources including articles on the Second World War in the Far East, copies of dispatches from significant moments in the conflict, tips on how to search the *Gazette*, and a list of all Victoria Cross recipients in the Second World War. You can also buy a personalised copy of the *Gazette* featuring your relative, along with a commemorative certificate.

The *Gazette* is celebrating the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War with an information-rich hub

272,555
The number of Cheshire baptism records added to **findmypast.co.uk**

110
The age of Donald Rose, the UK's oldest Second World War veteran, when he died on 11 July (**tinyurl.com/abc-don-vet**)

16,093,657
The number of Italian records added to **familysearch.org**

Our Warwickshire
The project has been named Group of the Year by the Community Archives and Heritage Group (**tinyurl.com/warwicks-ow**)

550
The number of National Trust jobs at risk (**tinyurl.com/guard-nt-jobs**)

165
The number of years it has taken for a watch owned by politician Herbert Ingram, who drowned in Lake Michigan, to be returned to his home town of Boston, Lincolnshire (**tinyurl.com/bbc-wch**)

Blaise Metreweli, the new head of MI6

Foreign Office defends new head of MI6

The Foreign Office has defended Blaise Metreweli, the new head of the Secret Intelligence Service MI6 (sis.gov.uk), after reports that her paternal grandfather was a Nazi spy in Ukraine.

On 15 June, the Government announced that Metreweli would become chief of MI6 in autumn 2025, replacing Sir Richard Moore. She is the first woman to head the organisation.

However, on 27 June the *Daily Mail* published a report into Metreweli's paternal grandfather, Constantine Dobrowolski, saying that Germany military archives show he served in the Nazis' secret military police, the Geheime Feldpolizei, in Ukraine, and took part in massacres of Jews and political partisans.

A spokesperson for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said, "Blaise Metreweli neither knew nor met her paternal grandfather.

"Blaise's ancestry is characterised by conflict and division and, as is the case for many with eastern European heritage, only partially understood. It is precisely this complex heritage which has contributed to her commitment to prevent conflict and protect the British public from modern threats from today's hostile states, as the next chief of MI6."

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Gone Much Too Soon

Alan Crosby laments the horrendous rates of child mortality faced by our ancestors

The statistics are terrifying. The burial entries in most parish registers from the 18th and 19th centuries show an appallingly high rate of infant and child mortality. Looking at some registers recently, I found that in the mid-1790s at Newton Heath, on the north-east edge of Manchester, 72 per cent of infants died before their fifth birthday, while 52 per cent of all burials involved children aged less than one year old.

The register helpfully records the cause of death, although the terms used do not meet the criteria of modern medical practice. Between 1793 and 1796 there were 218 burials of infants under two years of age, and of these a startling 87 died during a vicious smallpox epidemic that ravaged the community. Another 20 succumbed to whooping cough, which was also prevalent in these dark times. But the inadequacy of medical care – and indeed medical knowledge – is highlighted by the descriptions to the effect that 21 died of "fits" and 17 of "fever", terms that are well-nigh meaningless, but at least give an impression of the circumstances.

That was at the end of the 18th century, but 100 years later child mortality was still shockingly high in many British towns and cities. In 1903 the Medical Officer of Health in Preston, where I live, presented the borough council with a table showing mortality rates in the 33 largest towns in England and Wales. This included a column for "Deaths under 1 year for every 1000 births", which revealed that the healthiest towns were Derby (124 deaths per 1,000 births) and Brighton (125). 'Healthiest' was clearly relative, since even in these towns 12.5 per cent of all infants were dead within a year.

In other words, almost one in five Preston babies was doomed

The worst town on the list was Preston itself, where the infant-mortality rate was 188 per 1,000. In other words, almost one in five Preston babies was doomed. This was highly embarrassing for the town council, so the Medical Officer disguised the truth by listing the towns randomly – neither in alphabetical order nor in order of 'best to worst'. Only the most dedicated councillor would work through a complex set of numbers to find the shocking truth. Preston was the unhealthiest large town in the country.

Why should that be? The Medical Officer had no doubts – the town council was not the guilty party, even though the town had inadequate water supplies and lacked a satisfactory modern sewerage system. No, his forcefully expressed view was that the mothers of Preston were to blame.

They went out to work in the cotton mills and abandoned their infants to the care of childminders; they neglected the proper role of a woman in the home, by not providing nourishing meals; they made use of fast-food outlets (not his actual phrase!) and patronised pie sellers and fish-and-chip shops; and they fed their babies with proprietary patent medicines and soothing and soporific linctus preparations containing dangerous substances such as opium. The mothers of Preston were wilfully placing their infants in danger. There was no explanation as to why Bolton, a comparable large cotton town, had some of the best figures in the list, or why even Liverpool, notorious for its public-health problems, was substantially below Preston. It was so easy to shift the blame onto the women, and absolve the town council of responsibility.

Back in Manchester, my grandfather (born in 1897) was the first of his family of eight to survive – three died in infancy before him. My grandmother (born 1898) was one of seven, but again, three died as babies. Their mothers were not feckless, they did not go out to work, and they were devoted to their families. But poverty, grossly inadequate medical care, and poor sanitation were ever present in their part of the inner city – and that unholy alliance was surely to blame instead.

ALAN CROSBY lives in Lancashire and is the editor of *The Local Historian*

ILLUSTRATION WWW.SUEGENT.COM

VJ Day

We celebrate the 80th anniversary of Japan's surrender on 15 August. Here **Phil Tomaselli** explains the country's role in the Second World War, and how it was finally defeated

Although war with Germany's ally Japan was thought likely, and its ambitions of seizing natural resources it lacked were well known, the surprise air attack on the US Navy's base at Pearl Harbor on Oahu, Hawaii, on Sunday 7 December 1941 caught the US Pacific Fleet at anchor, their aeroplanes lined up on the ground. Four battleships were sunk and four damaged; 188 aircraft were destroyed and 159 damaged; and 2,403 Americans were killed. Japanese casualties were negligible. Luckily the three US aircraft carriers stationed at Pearl Harbor, absolutely necessary in an ocean of 60 million square miles and 7,000 miles across from San Francisco to Hong Kong, were at sea and were missed.

Simultaneously, Japanese troops seized the US islands of Guam and Wake and invaded the Philippines. Hong Kong fell on Christmas Day. Japan's army quickly advanced 700 miles to the key British fortress of Singapore, opposite its virtually undefended northern coast. A Royal Engineer advised Lieutenant-General Arthur Percival, Singapore's commander, to improve the defences. Percival thought that this would be "bad for morale", to which the engineer replied, "It'll be a bloody sight worse for morale to have Japanese troops running round all over the place, sir." So it proved. Percival surrendered the entire garrison on 15 February 1942. Some 130,000 troops were captured, and sent to labour in the jungle. The Dutch East Indies fell, and Darwin in Australia was bombed. Remnants of the Royal Navy retreated to Ceylon (now Sri Lanka).

In June 1942 the tide began

Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941, "a date which will live in infamy" according to US president Franklin D Roosevelt

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turning. The US Pacific Fleet, alerted through broken Japanese codes, ambushed the Japanese fleet attacking the island of Midway. In a three-day battle fought by carrier aircraft, Japan lost all four carriers while the USA lost just one. Unable to compete against the USA's shipbuilding capacity the Japanese Navy realised that Japan couldn't win. But this conclusion was kept secret from the Japanese Army.

Slowly the US Fleet, the US Army and the US Marines began recapturing islands. It was decided in 1943 that Britain and the Empire would liberate South-East Asia while the USA would attack Japan itself. By the start of 1945 the Americans had captured the key islands of Saipan and Guam (12,000 Americans died and 100,000 Japanese), and were building airfields for the new B-29 bombers. The British 14th Army had defeated a Japanese invasion of India at the Battles of Imphal and Kohima, and prepared to reconquer Burma.

The US Air Force had been bombing Japan from mainland China for months, with little effect on morale or industrial production. So the decision was made to try to replicate the firestorms with which the RAF had devastated Hamburg and Dresden in Germany.

A Firestorm In Tokyo

At twilight on 9 March, 325 B-29 heavy bombers took off from the Mariana Islands. When they reached a densely populated suburb of Tokyo containing many small factories, they scattered bombs containing phosphorus, napalm and magnesium. Wooden houses caught fire immediately, civil defence was overwhelmed, and intense heat sucked in fresh air, fanning the flames. Fleeing to the river, thousands of civilians suffocated. Others were trampled to death fighting to cross bridges to safety. In shelters they suffocated or died of the heat. Some 100,000 people died that night, more than were killed immediately by either of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Sixteen square miles of Tokyo burned flat. The capital was bombed again three times; similar raids attacked Osaka, Kobe and other cities. However, when Emperor Hirohito walked through the devastation the survivors bowed reverently. The spirit of the Japanese had not been broken.

On 1 April the island of Iwo Jima was captured after a 36-day battle (26,000 US casualties killed or wounded compared with 20,000 Japanese). The Japanese High Command hoped that such casualties might deter an invasion of the mainland. The Americans (now supported by the British Pacific Fleet) changed tactics when attacking the island fortress of Okinawa: huge naval guns and Air Force bombers pounded the island, tanks and flamethrowers were used, and explosives sealed Japanese troops in caves. In an 82-day battle, ending 22 June, 12,500 Americans were killed, a third from the Navy whose ships were targeted by kamikaze aircraft. Japanese (and Okinawan civilian) casualties totalled 226,000.

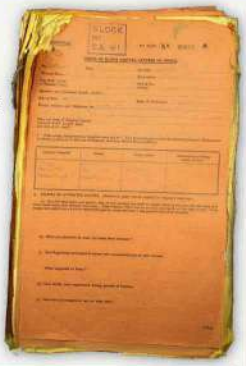
But the Japanese Army's military code forbade surrender, and senior officers sat in Hirohito's Council. The emperor refused President Harry S Truman's offer in July of terms that would allow him

Essential Records

You can use these documents to research the war against Japan, although many of them have not been digitised

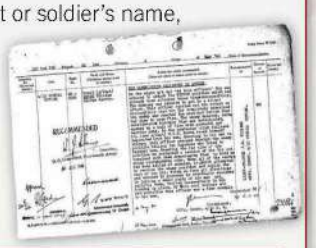
Liberated POW Questionnaires

Available on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) these reports by liberated soldiers include place and date of capture (including by Japan), camps held in, and escape attempts. Many seem to be missing, however.



Medal Recommendations

There are thousands of these covering Far East operations including Hong Kong and Burma, and also including Indian soldiers. Searchable by place, regiment or soldier's name, they are free to download from Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**) in series WO 373.



Naval Operations

Records of naval operations are mainly in ADM 199 and ADM 239 at The National Archives (TNA), although ADM 1 can produce surprises. You can access them via Discovery, then search for ship's name or place (eg Hong Kong).

Prisoners Of War

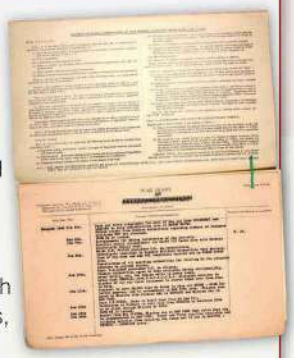
Both Ancestry and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) have digitised and searchable records of POWs, including images of the Japanese POW cards *(pictured)*. Some details are in English, others are in Japanese. It will help if you know the soldier's number.

War Crime Trials

After the war many Japanese were indicted for war crimes; records are in TNA's series WO 311 but rarely indexed by name. If you know the location of the crime then try it as a search term. They're not an easy read, and aren't digitised.

War Diaries

Many from early in the Second World War were destroyed before Singapore fell. The few digitised (on Ancestry) are very high level. You can search TNA's series WO 172, which includes Indian units, by regiment name.



to stay as emperor under US supervision, despite being warned of "utter destruction". In Europe thousands of military vehicles were being refurbished for the Pacific. The war was expected to last until late 1946 and Allied casualties predicted to exceed 50,000 dead, with hundreds of thousands wounded. Japanese casualties, if civilians became involved, would have been off the scale.

On 6 August sirens sounded over the city of Hiroshima. Looking up, only three planes were visible and many residents assumed that it was merely a reconnaissance flight, so didn't take cover. Shortly after 8.15am local time there was a huge flash as the first atomic bomb detonated. It vaporised many in the open; others were blinded and horribly burnt. The area of total destruction covered a mile radius. Initial estimates were 66,000 killed and 70,000 injured. Many more died later from radiation.

Truman's Bluff

In a statement, Truman promised, "If they [Japan] do not now accept our terms they may expect a rain of ruin from the air, the like of which has never been seen on this earth." On 9 August a second atomic bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, although casualties were lighter (39,000 dead and 25,000 injured immediately). The president was bluffing – the USA had no more atomic bombs – but the Japanese had no idea. They *did* know that Russia had broken its non-aggression pact with Japan by attacking Manchuria, while the British had virtually recaptured Burma.

Hirohito was no all-powerful monster. Although descended from a goddess (according to legend), he was an educated man of simple tastes. Tradition dictated that he chaired his Council, and could offer advice; but he could not dictate. His closest advisers the Inner Council met in an air-raid shelter. Great care was necessary; real power lay with the Japanese Army and Navy, and fanatics were threatening to assassinate anyone supporting surrender. Hirohito was horrified by the latest casualties, but his advisers were deadlocked. The prime minister Kantarō Suzuki broke precedent, asking the emperor to decide (they'd agreed this privately earlier). He confirmed, solemnly, that Truman's July offer should be

Les Bowler 1925–2023

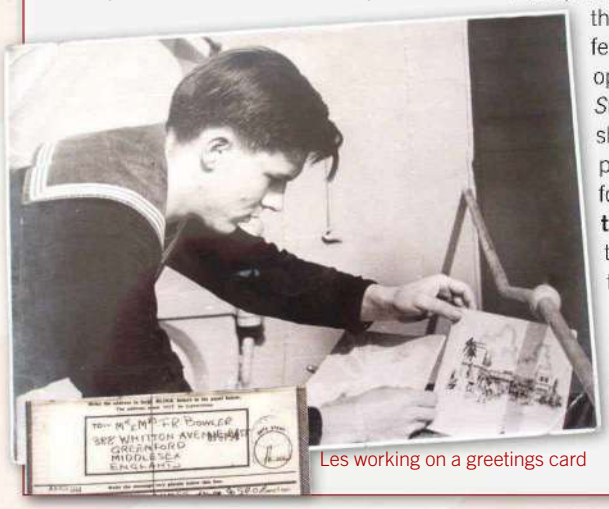
Phil shares a late friend's experiences fighting the Japanese

Les Bowler was conscripted in 1943 and given a limited choice of which service he wanted to enter. He chose the Royal Navy, and was formally called up in October 1943 and posted to HMS *Collingwood* for basic training.

After further training to become a radar operator he saw active service on HMS *Swiftsure*, a new anti-aircraft cruiser, where he worked the Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) system that identified friendly aircraft.

Serving in the Pacific he visited Australia and New Zealand, saw action with the 4th Cruiser Squadron as part of Task Force 57 of the US Fifth Fleet, shelling Japanese island positions and covering the landings at Iwo Jima and Okinawa. Here he saw kamikaze attacks, and *Swiftsure* suffered a near miss from a bomb. In later life he told me vividly how, as a radar operator, he was the first man aboard to spot the kamikaze planes; he could see them getting closer on his screen, and felt the ship shuddering as every gun opened fire. After Japan's surrender, *Swiftsure* was among the first British ships to return to Hong Kong and then proceeded to Nagasaki (you can view footage of its arrival on YouTube at **tinyurl.com/yt-swift-nag**). Les was able to visit the city only a few weeks after the atomic bomb had been dropped.

Les was popular with shipmates, not least because he used his training as an artist to draw greetings cards for them. In civilian life he became a graphic designer, married, adopted two children and died in 2023.



Les working on a greetings card

VJ Day Timeline

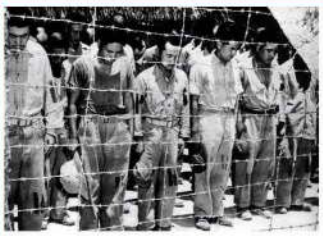
Phil outlines the major events surrounding Japan's surrender

1945

6 August
The USA drops an atomic bomb on Hiroshima. Two days later Russia declares war on Japan, invading Japanese-occupied Manchuria.

9 August
The USA drops the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki, and the US Fleet bombards the coast of Japan. Russians advance further into Manchuria.

10 August
Emperor Hirohito agrees to the Allies' peace terms, and his Foreign Ministry gets in touch with neutral countries to forward his message.



15 August
Hirohito announces by radio the complete surrender of all of the country's forces. Japanese POWs held in Guam bow their heads as they hear the broadcast.

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A crowd in New York City celebrates Japan's surrender in August 1945

accepted. Foreign Ministry radio operators sent word to neutral capitals to forward to the Allies. The news arrived on 10 August, and the Allies continued bombing as they considered their response.

When it became known that Hirohito had recorded a surrender speech a clique in the Japanese Army rebelled, hoping to destroy the recording. They failed. On 15 August, the speech was broadcast over the radio.

When Truman announced the surrender the USA celebrated wildly. He gave a short speech to the crowds at the White House, who cheered every word, and elsewhere in Washington DC a soldier and a young woman stripped naked and swapped clothes as the throng cheered. In London, electricians tested the lights around the Tower of London so that it could, again, be lit up at night. Church services were held as well as street parties, although not on the same scale as VE Day.

On 2 September Japan's representatives signed the formal instrument of surrender on board the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. Meanwhile US troops had landed, met no opposition and accepted the surrender of Japanese units. In Burma local truces were arranged awaiting a definite surrender order. On 13 September medical teams from HMS *Indefatigable* flew to Nagasaki where the evacuation of British and Australian prisoners of war had begun. Trainloads of men arrived at the rate of up to 1,000 daily. A ward on the hospital ship USS *Haven* treated POWs for malnutrition and lack of vitamins. Teams scoured South-East Asia locating POW camps; aircraft dropped supplies to starving prisoners. By early November most had been evacuated. Thousands had died in captivity of malnutrition and abuse; many survivors were never quite the same. The last POWs arrived in Britain in January 1946.

PHIL TOMASELLI
is a military family history expert and author

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2 September
The formal instrument of surrender is signed on the USS *Missouri* in Tokyo Bay. General Douglas MacArthur, supreme commander in the South-West Pacific Area, signs for the Allies.

12 September
Lord Mountbatten accepts the formal surrender of all of the Japanese forces in South-East Asia in a ceremony in Singapore, while thousands of locals cheer. Special Forces teams search for camps holding POWs.

1974

10 March
After three decades Hiroo Onoda stops fighting as a guerrilla on Lubang Island in the Philippines; he had thought that the surrender was only Allied propaganda.

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

Quartered Safe Out Here
George MacDonald Fraser
HarperCollins, 1992
The author of the Flashman novels describes the fighting in Burma, as well as the reaction to news of Hiroshima among the troops.

The Fall of Japan
William Craig
The Dial Press, 1967
Written from the US perspective (Britain isn't mentioned at all), this splendidly lucid description of the end of Japan's empire in 1945 and the political chaos leading to the country's surrender can be freely borrowed from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-fall-japan**.

The War Against Japan
Major-General S Woodburn Kirby
Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1957–1969
The five volumes of the British Government's official *History of the Second World War* that focus on the war against Japan are freely available on the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-wood-kirby**, and include the release of POWs.

WEBSITES

COFEPOW
w **cofepow.org.uk/armed-forces-stories**
You can find stories from POW camps on the website of this charity, which remembers those interned or imprisoned by Japan.

ROYAL BRITISH LEGION
w **www.britishlegion.org.uk/get-involved/events/remembrance-events/vj-day**
The website of the armed-forces charity includes a VJ Day 80 commemoration page with stories from veterans. See also **tinyurl.com/brit-legion-fepows**.

WW2 PEOPLE'S WAR
w **bbc.com/history/ww2peopleswar/categories/**
This BBC site includes stories from the public about the fall of Singapore, Burma and VJ Day.

ADVERTISEMENT FEATURE

Far East Prisoners of War Memorial Building

VJ Day: 80 years on

The Burma Railway Memorial

Join the National Memorial Arboretum this summer as it opens a window in time

Eighty years have passed since the end of the Second World War, and the Arboretum is honouring and celebrating this significant landmark with The Year Was 1945... Throughout 2025 the Arboretum is hosting exhibitions, events, services, talks and tours, sharing the stories of those who lived and served during this time.

The Year Was 1945… began in jubilant style in May with events inspired by the street-party spirit of VE Day. As we journey into summer, the programme turns its attention to the conflict in the Far East with a special series of exhibitions, events, and guided walks.

A War Fought Far From Home

The Arboretum is the UK's year-round centre of remembrance located in the heart of Staffordshire. Set in 150 acres of woodland and gardens it's an inspiring and uplifting place to visit with 25,000 trees and over 400 memorials.

Many of the memorials have been designed to reflect the stories of those they remember. The Burma Railway Memorial, a tribute to those forced to construct the infamous 'railway of death', features 30 metres of original track. The Changi Lych Gate Memorial is the structure erected at the entrance to the cemetery of the Changi prisoner of war camp in Singapore. Other memorials include the Burma Star, Brigade of Gurkhas and Sumatra Railway. The Chindit memorial honours the largest of the Allied Special Forces who operated deep behind enemy lines in Burma. The Far East Prisoners of War building shares the experiences of POWs during this unprecedented chapter in history.

Also as part of this year of remembrance, the Arboretum will be hosting four temporary dedicated exhibitions. These include *Prisoners of War – A Chaplain's Portraits*, which tells the story of Changi POW British Army Chaplain Fred Stallard. Fred would draw portraits of Japanese guards in return for pencils and paper. He sketched many of his fellow prisoners during his time as a POW, and 10 of these drawings can be seen as part of the exhibition. Each portrait is accompanied by personal stories.

Throughout the summer the Arboretum will also be offering VJ Day guided walks, and trails showing visitors the key memorials with a focus on the Far East. All the exhibitions, services, talks, walks and events running as part of The Year Was 1945… will continue at the Arboretum until 16 November.

Finding Connections

The Arboretum was created to remember those who have served and sacrificed on behalf of the nation. The memorials, dedicated to the armed forces, emergency services and civilian organisations, bring to life powerful personal histories. Visit today to discover yours.

Prisoners of War – A Chaplain's Portraits

Visitors are welcome to visit the Arboretum 364 days a year; entry is free although charges apply for parking and tours.

NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

For more information on visiting the Arboretum and The Year Was 1945… visit **thenma.org.uk/1945**

The National Memorial Arboretum Company Limited is a registered charity in England (no. 1043992) and a registered company (no. 02927443) in England and Wales.

HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS

Lauren Potts explains how she uncovered the history of her beloved childhood home

Carol Copley's daughter Joanne in the kitchen of Iona Cottage, and *(inset)* the house as it was in 2017 compared with Lauren's old photograph

CAROL COPLEY I LAUREN POTTS

Of all of the houses I've lived in, it is my childhood home that I think about the most. A three-storey, double-fronted Victorian end terrace called Iona Cottage (despite looking nothing like one), it rose imposingly from a corner plot in the Cumbrian town of Maryport, a stone's throw from the Irish Sea and a short walk from the remains of a Roman fort.

We lived in Iona Cottage from 1987, when I was two years old, to 1995 – and I loved it. Its dual-aspect rooms were flooded with light and packed with period features like coving, ceiling roses and corbels. Its angles and quirks stoked my imagination. I believed not only that a monster lived under the stairs and that Narnia could be found in the hallway cupboard, but that if I toyed with it long enough, the disconnected bell by the fireplace would reveal a secret room behind the chimney breast.

A neighbour once told my parents that the house had previously been owned by a "famous sea captain" and at some stage had also been much larger, stretching into the terrace behind it. Perhaps that explains the bell, my parents had mused, to call for maids on distant floors. They didn't dig further, but it was perhaps inevitable that I would. Now both a journalist and amateur genealogist, I couldn't help but eventually cross that thin line between family history and house history – and where better to start than with the home I've never forgotten, and which clearly had stories to tell.

The census narrowed construction down to after 1881 but before 1891

I turned first to the Ordnance Survey collection on the National Library of Scotland's free maps website **maps.nls.uk/os/** to pinpoint when Iona Cottage had been built, and initially narrowed it down to between 1864 and 1895. The former map showed an undeveloped road, but the latter showed a black box delineating part of the terrace. A clearer map in 1900 debunked at least part of the neighbour's story by showing four dwellings, suggesting that they'd probably always been separate houses. The census narrowed construction down further to sometime after the 1881 return – from which it was absent – but before 1891, when it was listed as the home of Wilton W Wood, a retired shipbuilder; his wife, Catherine; son, Kelsick; and a servant very likely summoned by that bell. ▶

Tom Waite, Mary and grandchildren photographed in 1925 at the back of Iona Cottage

Peter Nicholson's exhaustive website Maryport History (**maryporthistory.uk**) revealed that the Woods were instrumental in establishing the town as a centre for shipbuilding by opening its first shipyard in 1765. Almost 100 years later, Wilton W Wood himself launched the last vessel from the yard in 1862. Famous? Arguably so. A sea captain? Unclear. In the 1883 Bulmer's Directory and 1894 and 1910 Kelly's Directories, Wood was listed as a major, lieutenant colonel and colonel – all of them ranks in the Army.

According to Kelly's, the Woods had left Iona Cottage by 1897. The 1901 census recorded its next confirmed resident as Elizabeth Wilson, a single 40-year-old "living on her own means" and with only a servant. This would have made her unusual at the turn of the 20th century, but further information about her has proved elusive. What is certain, however, is that by 1906 Ms Wilson was no longer resident and the house had passed into the hands of a family that would hold on to it for 72 years.

The Kelly's Directory of that year told me that Tom Waite was its newest occupier. The 1911 census revealed him to be a 59-year-old railway-traffic superintendent living with his wife, Mary, and four of his five adult children: Mary, Enie, Florence and Tom. He was still living there when the 1921 census was taken, alongside Mary and Edwardine (Enie), and remained until his death at 77 in 1929, when the *West Cumberland Times and Star* wrote "few people will be more sincerely mourned than Tom Waite of Iona Cottage".

His obituary mentioned a 57-year career at Maryport and Carlisle Railway and 50 years of service to the Excelsior Lodge of the fraternal society Oddfellows, in addition to being an elder in the Presbyterian church, the town's first – and later oldest – special constable, and a high-ranking Freemason. As for Tom's hobbies, "Long walking tours were practically his only recreation."

Following his death, Mary and Enie remained at Iona Cottage. The 1939 register, which was taken on 29 September, mentioned that Waite's widow had become "incapacitated", and his daughter had become her carer, according to his great great grandson Derek Waite.

"Enie never had what we could call a 'proper' job," says Derek, who I traced through a family friend. "She was an artist, in particular with watercolours, and a very good one at that."

A Hoard Of Victoriana

Derek visited the house a number of times as a teenager in late 1965. His great aunt Florence and her husband George Neil had moved in with Enie sometime after Mary's death in 1943. "I only ever went into two downstairs rooms. I remember it was dark and quiet and filled with the kind of Victoriana that one would expect," he adds.

Enie died at Iona Cottage in 1966 and the Neils remained in

DEREK WAITE

5 ESSENTIAL RECORDS YOU CAN FIND ONLINE

Lauren recommends these digitised records for researching the history of a house

CENSUS ENTRIES

Since 1841 the census has recorded the names of everyone living in a property, not only the head of the household but also spouses, children, servants, lodgers and temporary visitors. Further details were also recorded in the 1939 Register *(pictured)*.

DIRECTORIES

Trade directories can tell you who lived in a property in the years between censuses. Kelly's is one of the most famous, publishing county titles from the 1840s. It's also reliable; canvassers were sent to each street to ensure that names and addresses were up to date.

ELECTORAL ROLLS

These are a great resource for researching after the last available census in 1921. I learnt that Iona Cottage was briefly unoccupied after the Second World War, since Enie was listed in the 1945–1947 electoral rolls for Spen Valley because she had moved to West Yorkshire to be near her sister Florence.

MAPS

The National Library of Scotland has a large online collection of free Ordnance Survey maps at **maps.nls.uk/os/**. You can compare maps from different periods to figure out when a house was built.

NEWSPAPERS

Houses with names can be a gift for family historians, and always worth typing into the search engine of an online newspaper collection such as the enormous British Newspaper Archive (**britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk**). Iona Cottage was specifically mentioned in Tom Waite's obituary.

the house until the mid-1970s, Derek explains. It had been empty for some time when Carol Copley and her husband Peter looked around it in 1979.

"It was all very old, with an old-fashioned black telephone and a sandstone plinth to keep food cold," remembers Carol, who saw my appeal for information in the Maryport Memories and News Facebook Group (**tinyurl.com/fb-maryport-mem**). "But as soon as walked in I thought it was the most beautiful house. It was a sunny September day and the sun was shining through the windows, and it just had this lovely feel."

The Copleys were in their early 20s, and looking for their first home. It became an epic renovation project that involved converting a lounge into a kitchen, and moving the bathroom from the second floor to the top. The work was not all plain sailing, however.

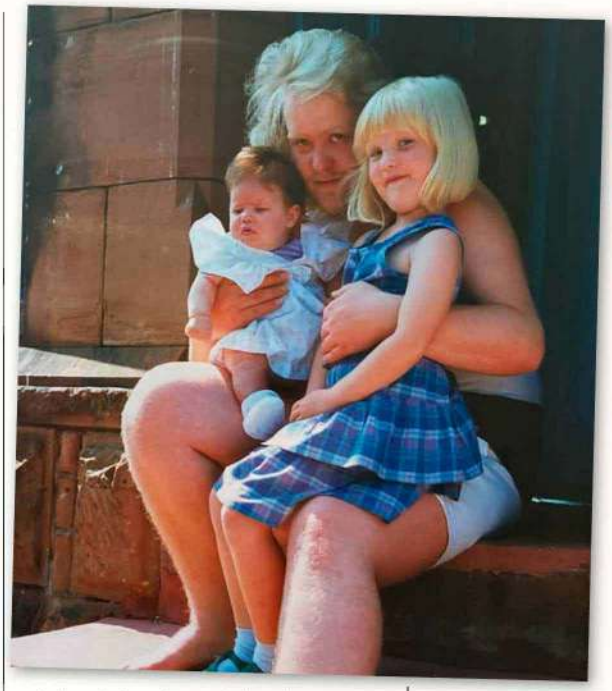
"One time we moved a brick in the chimney breast, and we could see right into next door's living room where they were watching the telly. But the renovation project was brilliant. We put a lot of love into it."

The pair welcomed two children at Iona Cottage and sold it in 1985 to a South African family, who in turn sold it to my parents. My dad still recalls viewing it and being struck by how much it looked like 1313 Mockingbird Lane, the mansion home of the titular spooky family in US sitcom *The Munsters* (1964–1966).

"It was dark, and I remember seeing these strange, angular, gothic features and barge boards silhouetted against the sky. I thought, 'What a cool house.' "

Similarly to the Copleys, he spent countless months on DIY jobs, painting Iona Cottage from top to bottom. It was a house he could've stayed in forever.

"I liked the quirkiness of it, and I liked where it was on the edge of the cliffs. I loved that house. I would buy it back," he says.



Lauren outside the front door of Iona Cottage with her father Mark and her baby sister Hannah

The next owner Vicky Wallace, who also responded to my Facebook post, remembers being "absolutely gutted" when her offer to buy Iona Cottage from my parents was initially turned down.

"We were looking to buy our first house. I knew that their preferred bidder would convert Iona Cottage into single-room rented bedsits. I walked halfway across town so I could appeal to your parents in person."

The Wallaces stayed until 2001, reinstating the Victorian décor and a coal fireplace, as well as retaining original features. "It was all part of the history of Iona Cottage," she says. It broke her heart when she moved: "I dream about living there quite often."

Since then, the house has changed hands three more times, taking the total number of families who've lived in it to 11. For a property that's at least 134 years old, it speaks volumes that so few people have chosen to leave it. Iona Cottage is special – and as far as I can tell, everyone who's lived in it would agree.

I remember seeing these angular, gothic features and barge boards

LAUREN POTTS is a family historian and journalist (**laurenpotts.co.uk**)

Resources

Don't miss these websites

ANCESTRY

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/1904/**

Subscription websites often rely on knowing the name of those who lived in a house to begin with, but their record sets can offer up other clues. For instance, in Ancestry's collection 'England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations), 1858–1995', Iona Cottage was mentioned in the probate calendar for Tom Waite – confirming that he still lived there after the 1921 census.

FACEBOOK

w **tinyurl.com/fb-maryport-mem**

Don't underestimate the power and reach of online history groups. Lauren traced two of Iona Cottage's previous owners by appealing for information in the Maryport Memories and News Facebook Group, which has almost 6,800 members.

FINDMYPAST

w **findmypast.co.uk/search-address**

Here you can search census records and the 1939 Register for an address, rather than occupant.

SPECIAL COLLECTIONS ONLINE

w **tinyurl.com/sco-dir**

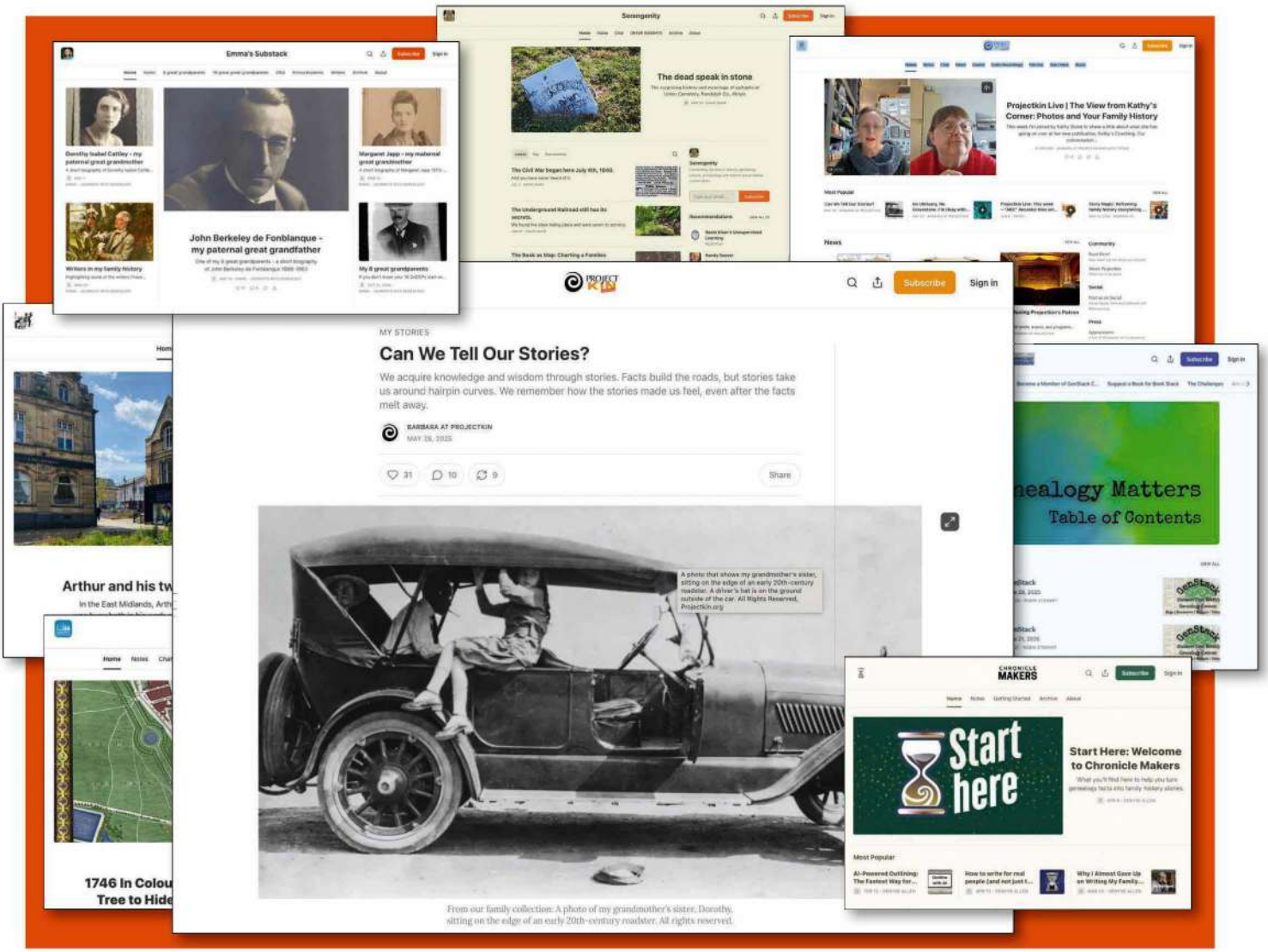
Historical trade directories like Kelly's are available on subscription sites but can also be scoured for free in this fantastic collection from the University of Leicester, which holds hundreds of digitised directories.

THEGENEALOGIST

w **thegenealogist.co.uk/lloyd-george-domesday**

The 1910 Valuation Office Survey, also known as the Lloyd George Domesday Survey, combines maps and residential data from 1910–1915. Digitisation is under way, and some counties' records are already fully searchable by name, parish and street.

LAUREN POTTS



From our family collection: A photo of my grandmother's sister, Dorothy, sitting on the edge of an early 20th-century roadster. All rights reserved.

GET STARTED WITH SUBSTACK

Genealogist **Emma Cox** shares her expert advice for making the most of the family history community on Substack

The free online-publishing platform Substack (**substack.com**) has been around since 2017, and is a great way for writers to share material with subscribers – and many of the creators are professional genealogists or family historians. If you're looking for a friendly place online to ask questions or get inspiration, I highly recommend visiting the website and reading articles by the ever-growing genealogy community.

There are a huge variety of different topics to choose from and people to follow. Everyone is very friendly and collaborative, and loves sharing their stories. Some writers focus on teaching you how to tell your own stories. Others share a tip of the day, or the latest developments with AI; discuss historical events, a particular location or industry, or even convict stories from Australia; or create a round-up of interesting posts every week.

One popular topic I particularly like is "My 16 great great grandparents", where writers discuss their forebears in the hope of discovering that they share ancestors with their subscribers. Some creators have written individual posts about each relation, while others have done summaries. I was going to cover this topic on my own Emma's Substack (**myfamilyhistory.substack.com**) but realised that I didn't have enough information about my great great grandparents, so decided to begin with my great grandparents instead.

So far I have done six of the eight, and the other two great grandparents should be finished

soon. Once I've written about them, I will continue with the next generation back.

This has also been a great way to review my existing research and notice any missing information. I found a couple of people where I didn't have their death records or wills, so I then obtained them from the General Register Office (**www.gro.gov.uk/gro/content**) and Probate Office (**probatesearch.service.gov.uk**).

I have another Substack called Journeys into Genealogy (**journeysintogenealogy.substack.com**) complementing my long-running podcast of the same name. I use the Substack to share interview transcripts and additional short interviews with my subscribers, plus other interesting articles or posts that I have found both inside and outside of Substack.

Joining Substack

To get involved, just sign up for a free account (click 'Create account' in the menu bar of Substack's homepage) and you will be prompted via a 'Dive into your interests' pop-up to choose topics that you are interested in. Genealogy, history (both ancient and modern) and biographies are some of the subjects that might be suggested, but you can always add others later by going to 'Manage interests' in 'Settings'. Add a short biographical note and a profile image if you want to (it's not obligatory), then watch your Substack feed fill up. Substack will also send you an email round-up of recent posts once a week.

In addition, you can use the 'Search' facility to find people, publications or topics, then choose the articles that you want to read – and if you want more posts by the same author, consider subscribing or following. Click 'Subscribe' if you'd like to receive posts directly into your email inbox, while clicking 'Follow' means you will see the person's Notes (short posts published to their profile) and activity in the feed on your homepage. Click the heart icon above or below a post to like it, the speech-balloon icon to comment, the 'Restack' icon (two arrows together making a circle) to share it within Substack, or you can alternatively click the upwards-pointing arrow to save a link to the post or share it externally via social media etc or post it externally.

Topics of interest are shown at the top of the list starting with 'Following', and if you subscribe to someone's posts you will follow them automatically.

A Substack post can include embedded video and/or audio material, as well as text. Some people even host their own podcasts on Substack.

Note that there is a paid element to Substack where some writers receive financial support from their readers via a one-off 'Buy me a coffee' payment or a monthly or annual subscription. In some of these cases only paid subscribers can read or comment on that creator's posts.

Finally in addition to exploring all of the writers I recommend following (see the box), you should first subscribe to Barbara Tien's **projectkin.substack.com**. Barbara has created a community for people to share their family stories, which is based on specific, how-to project 'recipes' following a recommended template. She also runs online events and programmes; I do a monthly one called *Emma Explores* where I share something interesting from my family history and the sources I used to find that information. Others include Jane Hutcheon's *How We Memorialise* and Projectkin's longest-running series *Kathy's Corner* by Kathy Stone about managing your family photographs. All of the events are recorded and available for free.

A post can include embedded video and/or audio material, as well as text

EMMA COX is a genealogist and podcaster. You can hear her recent interview with our editor Sarah Williams at **journeysintogenealogy.co.uk**

11 CREATORS TO FOLLOW ON SUBSTACK

CHRONICLE MAKERS
w **denyseallen.substack.com**
Denyse reveals tips for creating stories from your research.

FAMILY HISTORY WITH BILL MOORE
w **billmooreny.substack.com**
A New York-based genealogist discusses his discoveries.

FAMILY ROOTS
w **saphyre.substack.com**
Saphyre shares family stories and advice, including for AI tools.

GENEALOGY MATTERS
w **genealogymatters.substack.com**
Robin Stewart publishes a news round-up every Saturday.

LONDONIST TIME MACHINE
w **londonist.substack.com**
Learn about London's history.

PAUL CHIDDICKS
w **substack.com/@chiddickstree**
On Mondays Paul posts a list of items that caught his attention.

RANDY SEAVER
w **geneaholic.substack.com**
Randy shares his AI experiments.

SECRET SLEUTHS
w **secretsleuths.substack.com**
Dr Nell Darby investigates the cases of 19th-century detectives.

SERENGENITY
w **serengenity.substack.com**
Dave Shaw discusses graveyards and gravestone restorations.

THE MANCHESTER HISTORY CLUB
w **manchesterhistory.uk**
Dean Kirby writes about the city.

TRACKING DOWN THE FAMILY
w **trackingdownthefamily.substack.com**
Australia's Jennifer Jones rounds up articles in 'Sunday Snippets'.

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WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?®

'I'm Related To Grace Darling And A Dynasty Of Lighthouse Keepers'

CELEBRATING YOUR DISCOVERIES

Emily Cook has a tree full of lighthouse keepers. She has now written a tribute in which her relative Grace Darling meets the title character of *Doctor Who*, says **Claire Vaughan**

There's something intrinsically romantic about lighthouses. Is it the dedication of the keepers, bound to maintain the light at all costs to warn ships of nearby rocks? Or perhaps it's the tales of tragedy, heroic rescues, storms and self-sacrifice? Emily Cook has not one, two or even three lighthouse keepers in her family tree, but a whole dynasty of them, including one individual that many will have heard of – Grace Darling. Emily, a former assistant editor at *Doctor Who Magazine* who works as a TV development executive, has now brought her relation's story alive by writing a novel in which Grace teams up with the Doctor. And in introducing Grace to a whole new audience, Emily has found a fascination with the rest of her family of unsung heroes.

Grace's story aligns so well with the heart of *Doctor Who* storytelling

Emily's 3x great grandparents George and Catherine Knott

"I first discovered the lighthouse-keeping history in my family when I was in Year 3 at school. We were given a project on Grace Darling, and when I mentioned it at home, my parents smiled and said, 'Well, that's easy homework!' That's when I found out that Grace is actually a distant relative." Emily's dad drew out their family tree so that she could see the connection.

There are three great British lighthouse-keeping dynasties – the Knotts, the Halls and the Darlings – and they are all interconnected. "My great great uncle, Henry Thomas Knott (1851–1910), married Ellen Margaret Hall (1847–1886), who was the sister-in-law of Grace Darling's niece. As a seven year old, I was amazed. It felt quite special to learn I was distantly related to someone we were studying in class, especially someone so brave and iconic. It was the first time I felt a real, personal connection to history."

Emily began digging into her family history in earnest when she was pitching her book. She wanted it to be a historical adventure set near a lighthouse: "It's such a rich, atmospheric setting, full of drama and mystery. Grace's story aligns so well with the heart of *Doctor Who* storytelling: it entertains, educates, inspires and stirs the imagination."

The Knotts were the keepers at South Foreland Lighthouse in Dover, Kent, for two centuries. "The Knott family's legacy is remarkably well documented. They're even credited in the Guinness World Records as the longest-serving family of lighthouse keepers in history. Their service spans five generations and between them an extraordinary 278 years of continuous lighthouse keeping, beginning with William Knott in 1730 and concluding with Henry Thomas Knott in 1910."

Handed-Down History

A great deal of information about the Knotts is available online, but Emily reveals, "What's been especially heartening is discovering how deeply this history lives on within the family itself. The stories of our lighthouse-keeping ancestors have been passed down through generations. I first learnt of our connection to the Knotts from my dad, who in turn had grown up hearing all about them from his paternal grandmother, Doris Myrtle Cook (née Clark, 1909– ▶

UNP/TIM KAVANAGH

Emily Cook's Family Tree

▶ 1994). She was incredibly proud of her heritage. Her mother, Florence Matilda Knott (1875–1962), was the youngest child of George Knott."

An annotated family tree from *They All Lived in Lighthouses* (Gee & Son Ltd, 1984), written by Elizabeth G Roberts, whose mother was descended from the Knott line of lighthouse keepers, details the five generations of the dynasty. The fifth includes Emily's great great grandmother Florence Matilda Knott, who was one of 13 children, among them two lighthouse keepers and two customs officers. Her father was George Knott (1828–1904), the fourth generation in the line.

He served at multiple lighthouse stations: South Foreland; Eddystone (Smeaton's Tower) in Plymouth, Devon; Bideford in Devon; Bull Point, near Mortehoe in Devon; and finally North Foreland in Broadstairs, Kent, where he retired in 1891.

"What I love most about George is his creativity: he was a master model- and cabinet-maker. He used to salvage driftwood and materials from shipwrecks to craft intricate wooden scale models of the lighthouses he served in. You can see one exquisite model of Eddystone Lighthouse on display at Chatham Historic Dockyard (**thedockyard.co.uk**)."

George's brother John (1820–1851) also served and died at South Foreland aged 31, while another brother Henry (1819–1880) was the keeper at Flamborough Head, in East Riding of Yorkshire.

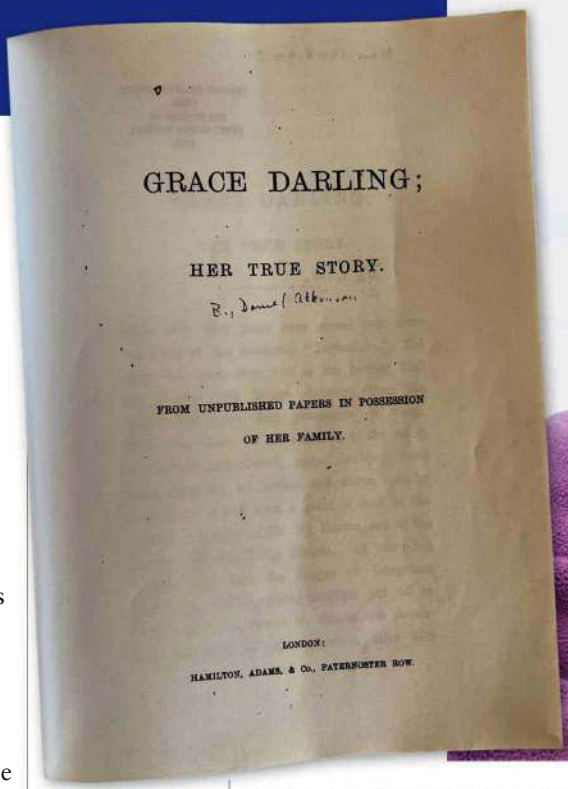
"Perhaps the most fascinating individual was their father Henry Knott (1797–1870) who served between 1818 and 1863. He worked during a period of rapid technological change, and in the late 1850s collaborated with Michael Faraday and Prof. Frederick Hale Holmes on the first experiments using electricity to light lighthouses. In fact, South Foreland became the first lighthouse in the world to use electric lighting in 1858. It was a groundbreaking moment in maritime history, and my ancestor was part of it."

His father Henry Knott (1748–1828), the second generation, was also born and died at South Foreland. "He worked there between 1777 and 1818, overseeing its transformation from coal fires to oil lamps, and helping to introduce parabolic reflectors in the 1790s."

William Knott (1706–1780), Henry's father, is the first generation of lighthouse keepers in the Knotts. "He began the family tradition at South Foreland Lighthouse in 1730, and served there for 50 years."

The link with the Darlings comes via Henry Thomas Knott's marriage to Ellen Margaret Hall (1847–1886). Ellen's brother Thomas Owen Hall (1839–1899) married Grace Horsley Darling (1844–1919), who was both niece and namesake of the legendary Grace Horsley Darling (1815–1842).

Grace was a real-life hero – brave, humble and utterly compelling


GRACE DARLING;

HER TRUE STORY.

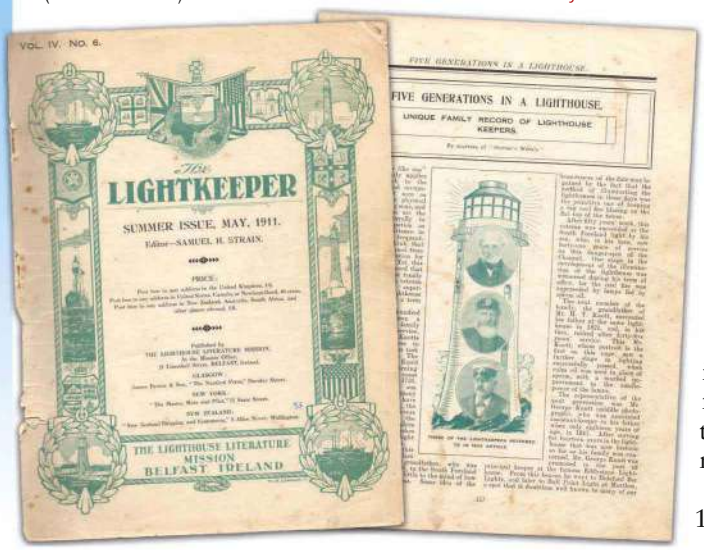
By Daniel Atkinson

FROM UNPUBLISHED PAPERS IN POSSESSION OF HER FAMILY.

LONDON:

HAMILTON, ADAMS, & Co., PATERNOSTER ROW.

Thomasin Darling's biography of her younger sister Grace, written with Daniel Atkinson


VOL. IV. NO. 6.

The LIGHTKEEPER

SUMMER ISSUE, MAY, 1911.

Editor—SAMUEL H. STRAIN.

THE LIGHTHOUSE LITERATURE MISSION BELFAST IRELAND

FIVE GENERATIONS IN A LIGHTHOUSE.

UNIQUE FAMILY RECORD OF LIGHTHOUSE KEEPERS.

An article that was published in *The Lightkeeper* in May 1911 (Vol. IV, No. 6) provided invaluable information about the Knott family

The Darlings' Daring

The daughter of the Longstone lighthouse keeper, William Darling (1786–1865), and his wife Thomasin Horsley (1774–1848), Grace helped rescue survivors of the paddle steamer SS *Forfarshire*, which ran aground on the Farne Islands off the Northumberland coast in 1838 during a storm. Since they believed the weather conditions were too rough to launch the local lifeboat, Grace and William set out themselves in a 21-foot rowing boat, battling strong winds and ferocious waves and managing to save eight crew and one passenger in all. Both were awarded the Silver Medal for Gallantry by the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI).

"One of the biggest surprises for me has been just how accessible

Emily took this photo during a trip to see the Darling family's lighthouse on Longstone Rock

the history is. So much of the information about my lighthouse-keeper ancestors has been lovingly gathered and preserved by family members across generations. Via books, letters and personal accounts, they have proudly documented their heritage. It's been a wonderful way for me to connect with the past.

"Grace was a real-life hero – brave, humble and utterly compelling. Yet it's surprising how little people today know about her. I thought telling her story through a *Doctor Who* adventure would bring her courageous spirit to a whole new audience."

In Emily's novel *Fear Death by Water* the TARDIS crash-lands on the sinking SS *Forfarshire* and the Fifteenth Doctor, played in the TV series by Ncuti Gatwa, and remaining survivors fight for their lives, while Grace sets out to save them. In the aftermath, she struggles with her new-found fame, and with the vision she saw in the storm of something wrecking ships and stealing souls.

"One of the most exciting aspects was pairing Grace with the Doctor. She essentially steps into the companion role. They couldn't be more different – one a Victorian lighthouse keeper's daughter, the other a time-travelling alien – but they're both heroes in their own right."

Emily did a lot of research into Grace: "I immersed myself in her world as deeply as I could. I needed to really get to know her in order to be able to write her as a rounded character. I visited her grandparents' home Horsley Cottage in Bamburgh, where she was born; her family's lighthouse on Longstone Rock; her burial site at St Aidan's churchyard in Bamburgh; and a memorial tree in Battersea Park, Wandsworth, South-West London – which I was surprised to discover just down the road from where I live!

"I also went to the RNLI Grace Darling Museum in Bamburgh (**tinyurl.com/rnli-mus-gd**), where I had access to a rare copy of *Grace Darling: Her True Story – From Unpublished Papers in Possession of Her Family*, written by Thomasin Darling (1808–1886) and Daniel Atkinson (Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1880). Grace's older sister wrote the book to push back against the sensationalised version of her life that was popular at the time."

Grace Under Pressure

Reading that book proved to be something of a revelation. "My understanding of Grace had been shaped by the legend taught at school. I hadn't realised how reluctant she was to be labelled a hero, or how much she struggled in the aftermath of the rescue. She suffered from extreme anxiety, and found the sudden fame and intense media attention deeply distressing. That emotional toll, and the way that she was mythologised, became far more compelling to me than the rescue itself – and that is something I've tried to explore in my novel."

"It was exciting to find out that I'm closely connected by blood to such a fascinating dynasty. I think that sense of wonder started with my dad, who has always been intrigued by our family's maritime past, and he's passed his curiosity on to me. I feel proud to come from a line of people who held such responsibility and lived such extraordinary, often unsung, lives," Emily concludes.

Fear Death by Water was published by BBC Books on 29 May (RRP £16.99)

TELL YOUR STORY

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*

Resources

These resources helped Emily explore her remarkable family

ARCHIVE

THE LONDON ARCHIVES

a **40 Northampton Road, London EC1R 0HB**
t 020 7332 3820
w **thelondonarchives.org/**

Many of the records relating to lighthouses and their keepers were destroyed during the Second World War when the London headquarters of Trinity House, the General Lighthouse Authority (GLA) for England, Wales, the Channel Islands and Gibraltar (**trinityhouse.co.uk**), was hit by a German bomb. Surviving records are at TLA, including registers of staff appointed (1914–1972) and station books listing keepers and crews (1941–1955). See **tinyurl.com/tla-guide-trinity** for advice on tracing lighthouse keepers.

BOOK

Grace Darling: Her True Story – From Unpublished Papers in Possession of Her Family

Thomasin Darling and Daniel Atkinson

Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1880

This account, based on Grace's letters and personal documents with her older sister Thomasin's commentary, is the most accurate and intimate portrait we have. It's at the RNLI Grace Darling Museum in Bamburgh (**tinyurl.com/rnli-mus-gd**).

WEBSITE

LIGHTHOUSE PERSONNEL IN ENGLAND, WALES AND THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

w **genuki.org.uk/big/Lighthouses/Keepers**

Genealogical portal GENUKI has this table created by the late Stan Waight and his team of contributors. It brings together the names of keepers and their families from the censuses, and surviving staff and other records from 1841–1910. You can also learn about the location of the lighthouse stations.

FOCUS ON

THE CHANNEL ISLANDS

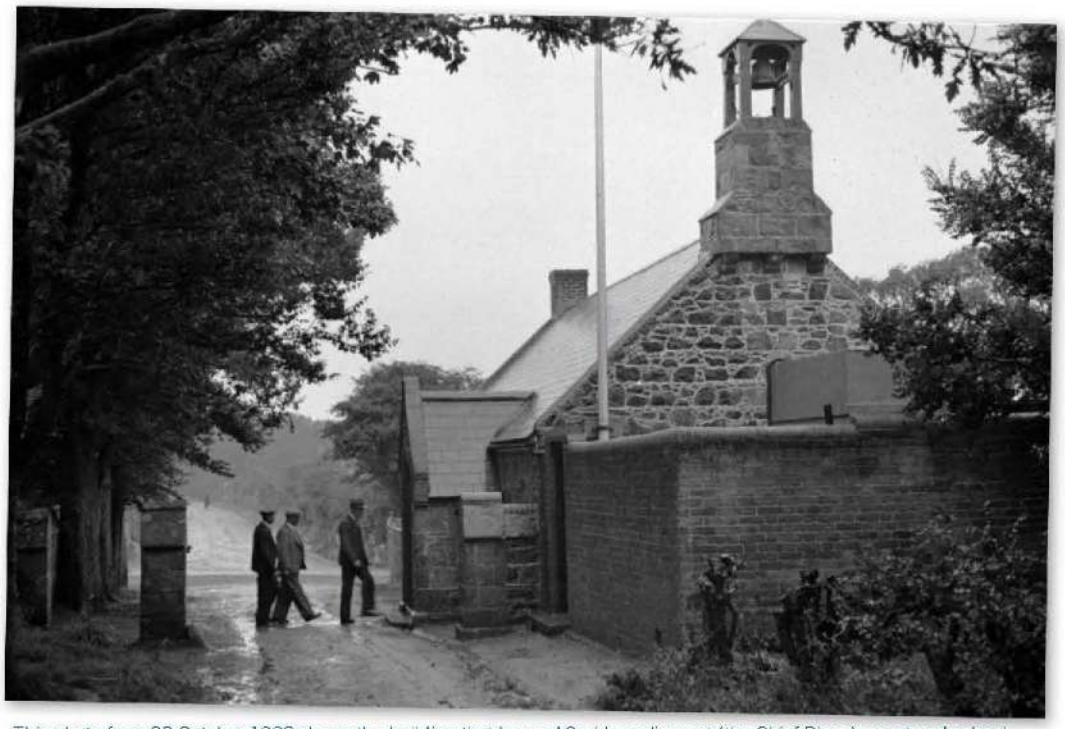
Marie-Louise Backhurst tells the story of the Channel Islands, and shares the best resources for researching relations from the area

The 13th-century castle Mont Orgueil overlooking Gorey Harbour in Jersey

GETTY IMAGES

Emilie Le Breton (better known as Lillie Langtry, 1853–1929), actor; Graeme Le Saux (born 1968), footballer; the Lord Mayor of London Sir Paul Le Mesurier (1755–1805); and Maya Le Tissier (born 2002), Lioness… all of these people have something in common. Despite their French-sounding names, they were born in one of the Channel Islands. Never a part of France, the islands still retain a sense of their geographical proximity to that country, within sight of the coast of Normandy and 85 miles away from England.

Jersey, Guernsey, Alderney, Sark, Brecqhou, Herm, Lihou and Jethou became known as the Channel Islands in the 19th century because of their strategic position in the Western Approaches, but they are also known as the Anglo-Norman Isles (*Les Îles Anglo-Normandes*). Originally part of the Duchy of Normandy, they have been English Crown possessions since William the Conqueror, the Duke of Normandy, defeated King Harold at the Battle of Hastings in 1066. Although both the Bailiwick of Jersey, which includes two uninhabited reefs, the Minquiers and the Écréhous, and that of Guernsey, which includes Alderney, Sark, Brecqhou, Herm, Lihou and Jethou, make their own laws and have their own courts, the Crown is represented in each bailiwick by a lieutenant-governor. Since the islands are not part of the UK, all their records are kept separately from those of the UK, except for the census.



This photo from 22 October 1938 shows the building that housed Sark's parliament (the Chief Pleas), court and school

French was the official language until 1948, and the registers of baptisms/births, marriages and burials/deaths are almost entirely in that language, as are court records and newspapers. The islanders also spoke languages akin to the Norman language, Jèrriais in Jersey and Guernésiais in Guernsey, but they were not used in official records. The islands were Catholic until about 1540 when the Church of England became the established church. The islands are divided into parishes, which are both civil and ecclesiastical centres; the earliest parish register dates from 1540, but most did not start until the late 1570s or afterwards. Women ▶

The islands' records are kept separately from those of the UK, except for the census

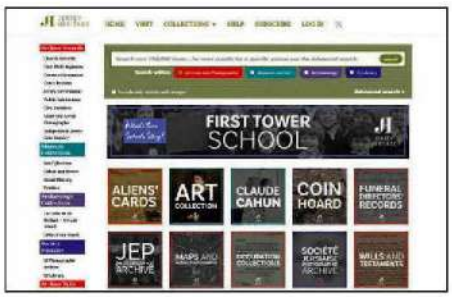
Expert Picks

Marie-Louise recommends these three websites for tracking down essential sources

Guernsey's Island Archives

w **gov.gg/islandarchives**

The archive has many fiefs' manorial records from the 15th to the 20th centuries, such as *Livres de Perchage* showing property owners.



Jersey Archive's Catalogue

w **catalogue.jerseyheritage.org**

Some digitised material, such as registration cards for non-British residents, is only available with an annual subscription (£40).

Priaulx Library

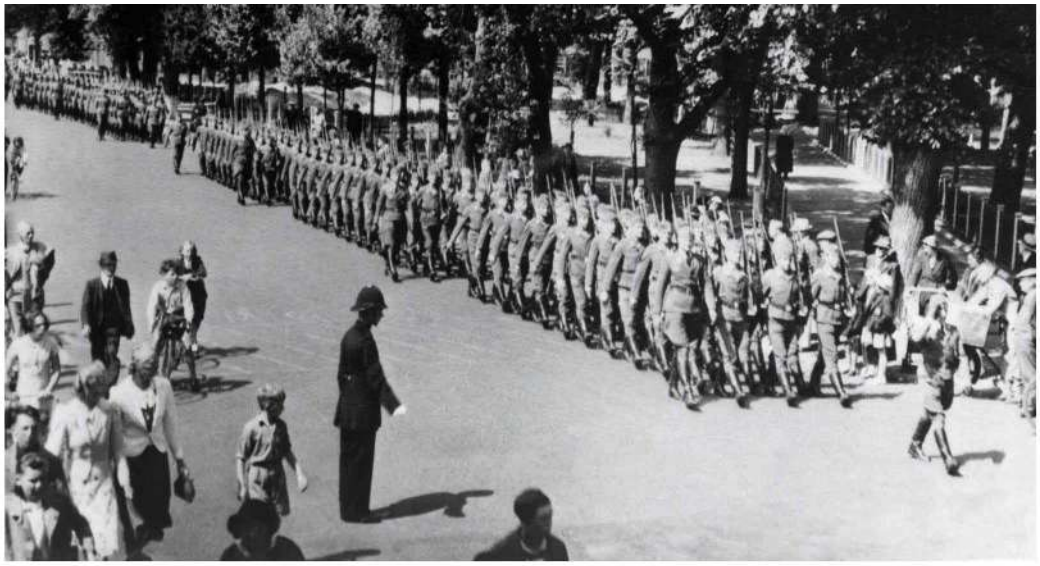
w **tinyurl.com/priaulx-fam-hist**

The material in this Guernsey library includes civil and parish records and almanacs. Many holdings are available digitally on Findmypast.

GETTY IMAGES

generally kept their maiden names throughout the records. The baptism registers often give the names of godparents, who may be relatives. French Protestants – Huguenots – escaped to the Channel Islands from this time and later, and are listed.

Methodism came to the islands in the 1780s and there are separate Methodist registers, while Catholicism returned with the arrival of French Royalist refugees from 1789 and was reinforced by Irish workers in the early 19th century. Therefore there are Catholic registers in both French and English, as well as Latin.



German troops parade in St Helier, the capital of Jersey, in 1940 during the Occupation

Civil Registration

Civil registers of birth, marriage and death started in 1840 in Guernsey, in 1842 in Jersey, in 1850 for Alderney and in 1925 in Sark. The registers are kept in the respective islands, although Guernsey has copies of those for Alderney and Sark. Copies are available in Jersey either from the Office of the Superintendent Registrar (**gov.je/government/departments/justicehomeaffairs/officesuperintendentregistrar/Pages/home.aspx**) or Jersey Archive (**jerseyheritage.org/visit/places-to-visit/jersey-archive/**). In Guernsey try the Royal Court Greffe (**guernseyroyalcourt.gg**).

Copies of the censuses were sent to England between 1841 and 2021, and those up to 1921 are on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). The 1931 returns were destroyed along with those for England and Wales in a fire in Middlesex in 1942.

The Channel Islands were occupied by the Germans between 1940 and 1945, and islanders had to have identity cards with photographs. These can now be found on the Jersey Archive website or on Findmypast for Guernsey, Sark and just a few from Alderney, which had been almost entirely evacuated. There was a census in 1941 in Jersey, but no names were kept. Many people left the islands to go to the mainland just before the Germans invaded, and those from Guernsey are detailed in *Guernsey Evacuees* by Gillian Mawson (The History Press, 2012). In September 1942 Hitler decided to deport non-islanders from both islands to camps in Germany. For names, see *Islanders Deported Part 1* and *Part 2* by Roger E Harris (Channel Islands Specialists' Society Publishing, 1979 and 1983).

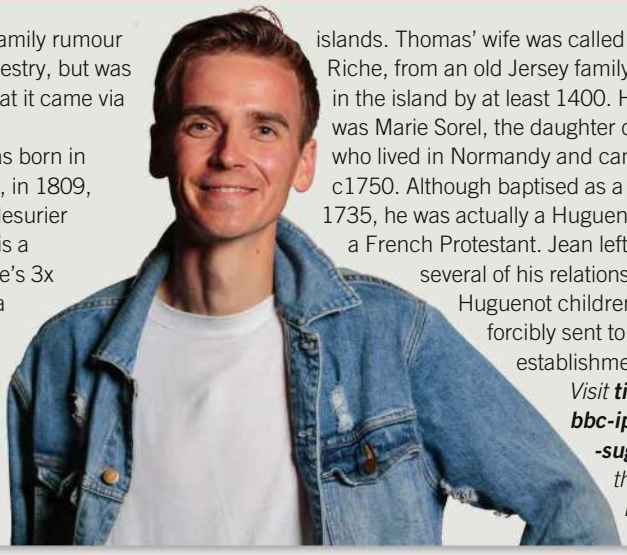
Both Jersey and Guernsey have their own archives and libraries. There are two main family history societies: the Channel Islands Family History Society (**jerseyfamilyhistory.org**), which deals mainly with Jersey, and the Family History Section of La Société Guernesiaise (**societe.org.gg/wp/family-history/**) for Guernsey. There are other important societies, such as the Société Jersiaise (**societe.je**), which has digitised local newspapers, the Alderney Society which runs Alderney Museum (**alderneymuseum.org**), and La Société Sercquaise (**socsercq.org**). The Priaulx Library in St Peter Port, Guernsey, has an interesting website (**priaulxlibrary.co.uk**) as

DID YOU KNOW?

The islands of Jersey and Guernsey are two self-governing bailiwicks, each with their own governments (known as the States) and their own Royal Courts.

Joe Sugg

YouTuber Joe Sugg explored his Channel Islands roots in his 2021 episode of *WDYTYA?*



Joe Sugg had heard a family rumour that he had French ancestry, but was surprised to discover that it came via the Channel Islands.

Thomas Pritchard was born in St Peter Port, Guernsey, in 1809, and his son Albert Le Mesurier Pritchard (Le Mesurier is a Guernsey surname), Joe's 3x great grandfather, was a telegraph operator first in St Helier, then in England. The new telegraph technology made an enormous difference to the otherwise isolated islands. Thomas' wife was called Emily Le Riche, from an old Jersey family that was in the island by at least 1400. Her mother was Marie Sorel, the daughter of Jean Sorel, who lived in Normandy and came to Jersey c1750. Although baptised as a Catholic in 1735, he was actually a Huguenot refugee, a French Protestant. Jean left Frênes with several of his relations, because Huguenot children were being forcibly sent to Catholic establishments.

*Visit **tinyurl.com/bbc-iplayer-wdyta-sugg** to watch the episode on BBC iPlayer.*

GETTY IMAGES

Registration Form, 1940

This registration form for an identity card mandated by the Germans is in Guernsey's Island Archives and Findmypast's collection 'Guernsey, Identity Registration Forms (German Occupation) 1940–1945' at **tinyurl.com/fmp-guern-cards**

1 Registration Form

Residents had to complete two copies of the form, and their information was copied onto an identity card. Photos were added in March 1941.

2 Place Of Birth

Together with nationality, this information was later used to deport residents who were not British or were not born in the Channel Islands. Robert Hathaway, Sibyl Hathaway's husband, was born in New Jersey, USA, and became a naturalised British subject. In 1943 he was deported from Sark via Guernsey and France to Bavaria.

3 Occupation

Sibyl's occupation is "Dame de Serk" (Dame of Sark); she inherited the Fief of Sark from her father.

4 Serving Relatives

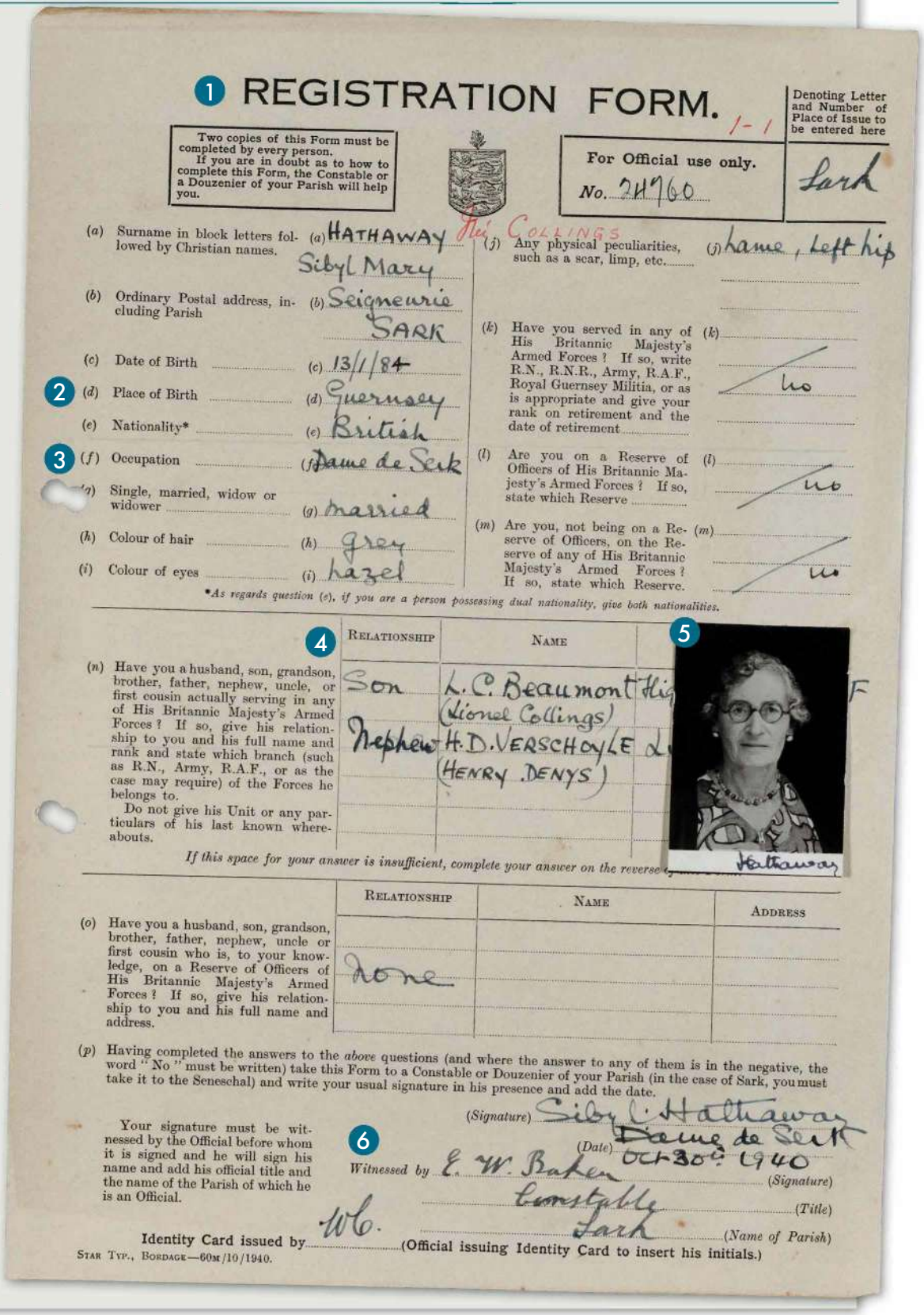
Sibyl was asked if her "husband, son, grandson, brother, father, nephew, uncle, or first cousin" were serving in the British armed forces. Such information may have been used by the Germans if the UK had been invaded.

5 Photograph

Some of the photos were glued to the form, hiding written responses.

6 Witness

The form was witnessed by the Sark parish constable. This civil role, which includes policing, dates from about 1350 in all the islands and still continues to this day.



1 REGISTRATION FORM. 1-1

Denoting Letter and Number of Place of Issue to be entered here: Sark

Two copies of this Form must be completed by every person. If you are in doubt as to how to complete this Form, the Constable or a Douzenier of your Parish will help you.

For Official use only. No. 24760

(a) Surname in block letters followed by Christian names. (a) HATHAWAY Sibyl Mary (Née COLLINGS)

(b) Ordinary Postal address, including Parish (b) Seigneurie SARK

(c) Date of Birth (c) 13/1/84

2 (d) Place of Birth (d) Guernsey

(e) Nationality* (e) British

3 (f) Occupation (f) Dame de Serk

(g) Single, married, widow or widower (g) married

(h) Colour of hair (h) grey

(i) Colour of eyes (i) hazel

(j) Any physical peculiarities, such as a scar, limp, etc. (j) lame, left hip

(k) Have you served in any of His Britannic Majesty's Armed Forces? If so, write R.N., R.N.R., Army, R.A.F., Royal Guernsey Militia, or as is appropriate and give your rank on retirement and the date of retirement (k) no

(l) Are you on a Reserve of Officers of His Britannic Majesty's Armed Forces? If so, state which Reserve (l) no

(m) Are you, not being on a Reserve of Officers, on the Reserve of any of His Britannic Majesty's Armed Forces? If so, state which Reserve. (m) no

*As regards question (e), if you are a person possessing dual nationality, give both nationalities.

4

(n) Have you a husband, son, grandson, brother, father, nephew, uncle, or first cousin actually serving in any of His Britannic Majesty's Armed Forces? If so, give his relationship to you and his full name and rank and state which branch (such as R.N., Army, R.A.F., or as the case may require) of the Forces he belongs to. Do not give his Unit or any particulars of his last known whereabouts.

Relationship	Name
Son	L. C. Beaumont Hig (Lionel Collings)
Nephew	H. D. VERSCHOYLE (HENRY DENYS)

5

If this space for your answer is insufficient, complete your answer on the reverse.

(o) Have you a husband, son, grandson, brother, father, nephew, uncle or first cousin who is, to your knowledge, on a Reserve of Officers of His Britannic Majesty's Armed Forces? If so, give his relationship to you and his full name and address.

Relationship	Name	Address
none		

(p) Having completed the answers to the above questions (and where the answer to any of them is in the negative, the word "No" must be written) take this Form to a Constable or Douzenier of your Parish (in the case of Sark, you must take it to the Seneschal) and write your usual signature in his presence and add the date.

(Signature) Sibyl Hathaway Dame de Serk

(Date) Oct 30th 1940

6

Your signature must be witnessed by the Official before whom it is signed and he will sign his name and add his official title and the name of the Parish of which he is an Official.

Witnessed by E. W. Baker (Signature)

Constable (Title)

Sark (Name of Parish)

Identity Card issued by W.C. (Official issuing Identity Card to insert his initials.)

Star Typ., Bordage—60m/10/1940.

A man shows two swimmers one of the ormers he has harvested in Guernsey, 1933. The mollusc is a local delicacy

well as a fine collection of family papers and other records, as does the Lord Coutanche Library of the Société Jersiaise in St Helier, (**societe.je/departments/library/**). The latter also has a photographic collection with many family portraits.

Digitised Records

Until a few years ago it was not possible to see the records unless one visited the islands, but the Jersey parish registers are now on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/60860**) and Findmypast has a vast collection of Guernsey records, including parish registers (**findmypast.co.uk/partners/bailiwick-of-guernsey**). The free site FamilySearch also has some Guernsey material (see **familysearch.org/en/wiki/Guernsey_Genealogy**), shared with Ancestry.

Because of the islands' small size there are excellent property records with details of families who owned the houses through many generations. There are also maps showing property owners, such as the 1849 Godfray map for Jersey and a map of Alderney in 1831 with the owners of the common land. Succession laws are based on Norman laws (although they have now been updated). Wills are divided into *immeubles* (real estate) and *meubles* (movable goods and money).

For a general view of Jersey families, James Bertrand Payne's *Armorial of Jersey* (1859–1865) is free from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-payne-jersey**. *The Fief of Sark* by AH Ewen and AR de Carteret (The Guernsey Press, 1969) gives a great deal of information on the 40 families who resettled Sark in 1565 and their descendants. For emigrants to the USA and Canada there are two books by Marion Turk, *The Quiet Adventurers in North America* (Harlo, 1983), which can be borrowed for free from the Internet Archive via **tinyurl.com/arch-turk-nam**, and *The Quiet Adventurers in Canada* (Harlo, 1979).

In addition, the online encyclopedia Jerripedia (**jerripedia.org**) has a database of birth/baptism, marriage and burial/death records: **search.jerripediabmd.net**. Jersey Archive has digitised many documents, such as house insurance and funeral records, which are available to subscribers via **catalogue.jerseyheritage.org**. The website of the Island Archives in Guernsey (**gov.gg/islandarchives**) gives details of some of its more unusual holdings, such as the Register of Stranger Poor (1892–1914, indexed online). The Guernsey Society in London (**guernsey-society.org.uk**) publishes a review, as does the Jersey Society in London (**jerseysocietyinlondon.org**). Finally there are the Facebook Groups Jersey Family Tree (**tinyurl.com/fb-jersey-family-tree**), Guernsey Family History (**facebook.com/groups/Guernseygenealogy/**) and Guernsey Family Tree (**tinyurl.com/fb-guernsey-family-tree**).

TOP TIP!

The collections of the Jersey-focused Channel Islands Family History Society and La Société Guernesiaise's Family History Section include a number of family trees.

MARIE-LOUISE BACKHURST is the author of *Tracing Your Channel Islands Ancestors* (Pen & Sword, 2011) and co-founder of the Channel Islands Family History Society (**jerseyfamilyhistory.org**)

Resources

Take your research further

ARCHIVES

ISLAND ARCHIVES
a St Barnabas, Cornet Street, St Peter Port, Guernsey GY1 1LF
t 01481 224512
w **gov.gg/islandarchives**
As well as Guernsey records, you can find an extensive Alderney collection here.

JERSEY ARCHIVE
a Clarence Road, St Helier, Jersey JE2 4JY
t 01534 833300
w **tinyurl.com/jers-arch**
The website has research guides and digitised records. Staff offer a research service.

MUSEUMS

ALDERNEY MUSEUM
a High Street, Alderney GY9 3TG
t 01481 823222
w **alderneymuseum.org/**
Run by the Alderney Society, the museum holds Second World War material, plus militia and garrison artefacts.

GUERNSEY MUSEUM
a Candie Road, Guernsey GY1 1UG
t 01481 226518
w **museums.gov.gg/gmag**
Holdings include First World War letters and reports from the Royal Guernsey Light Infantry Regiment.

SOCIETIES

CHANNEL ISLANDS OCCUPATION SOCIETY
w **ciosjersey.org**
w **ciosguernsey.org.gg/**
This society in Jersey and Guernsey looks after relics from the Occupation.

LA SOCIÉTÉ SERCQUAISE
w **socsercq.org**
The society has collections of Sark family history, plus transcriptions of Sercquiais, the language of Sark.

GETTY IMAGES

Royal Air Force

Ground staff load a Hawker Typhoon with bombs, c1940

Eighty years on from VJ Day, **Jonathan Scott** recommends sites for tracing RAF personnel

The Royal Air Force was formed in the last year of the First World War. And by the time that the guns fell silent at the end of the Second World War, it had grown to almost one million serving personnel.

Many service records from before 1939 have been available online for some time. Records of airmen and officers who served during the Second World War, however, have remained with the Ministry of Defence, only accessible by request (see **www.gov.uk/get-copy-military-records-of-service**). While this rather old-fashioned system has been improved recently, there are still significant delays between ordering a record and receiving it.

Thankfully, Second World War records from all three services are currently being transferred to The National Archives at Kew (TNA), and digitised by Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**). Such is the size and complexity of the material, it may be some time before new RAF records see the light of day. But you can keep an eye on progress via our 'News' section and TNA's 'Our Projects' web page (**tinyurl.com/tna-projects-mod-digitisation**).

INTERNATIONAL BOMBER COMMAND CENTRE

w **internationalbcc.co.uk/history/losses-database/**

Bomber Command was formed in 1936 to manage the RAF's bomber forces. The International Bomber Command Centre in Lincoln compiles the online Losses Database, which has been expanded to cover the pre- and postwar period. It also now includes the 2nd Tactical Air Force – formed in June 1943 – adding bombing losses sustained in Mediterranean, Middle Eastern and North African theatres. Many of the 66,836 entries include biographies and pictures, and entries will often list servicemen who died on the same aircraft. If you don't find a name here, your relative may have served in one of the other commands or theatres that haven't yet been added. Coastal Command, for example, is due to be added in the first quarter of 2026.

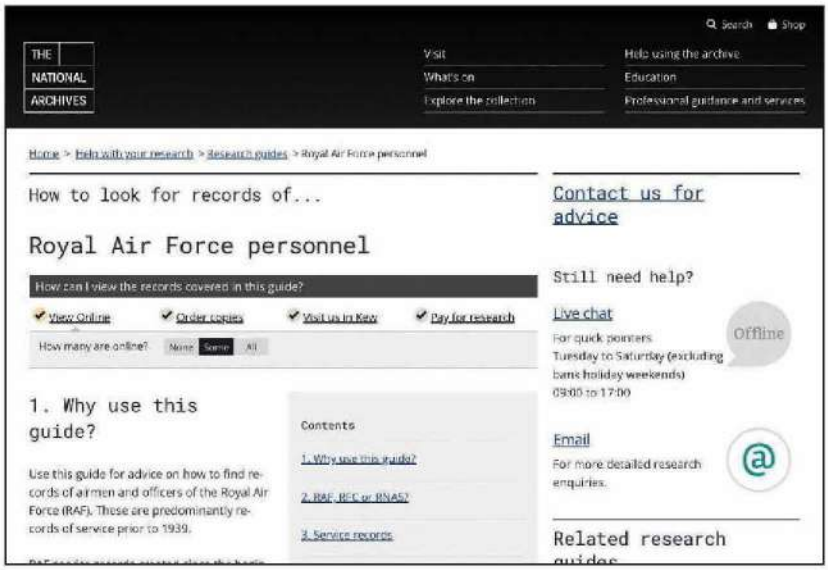
GETTY IMAGES

BEST WEBSITES

THEGENEALOGIST

w **tinyurl.com/thegenealogist-orbs**

TheGenealogist has a vast collection of transcribed and indexed RAF Operations Record Books (ORBs) amounting to 13,667,571 records, giving you an unrivalled picture of sorties, actions and life back at base. They are also available from TNA via **nationalarchives.gov.uk/help-with-your-research/research-guides/royal-air-force-operations-record-books-1911-1963/**, but the transcriptions mean you can search by name, aircraft, location, keyword and many other fields. Ancestry has a collection too (**ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/62280/**), which is being updated to include action up to 1943, but TheGenealogist's is much larger and more comprehensive.



THE NATIONAL ARCHIVES

w **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-raf-personnel**

Aircraft and aircrew were supported by a huge network of training units, repair depots, hospitals, transport pools and their own protective soldiers – the RAF Regiment. This TNA guide gives an overview of the kinds of records that are available for airmen and officers. Some sources are digitised, others are indexed and searchable via TNA's online catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**), others are only available in person. The links to related research guides in the right-hand panel include the Royal Flying Corps airmen and officers, the Royal Naval Air Service ratings and officers, Women's Royal Air Force personnel, and RAF operations and squadrons.

EXPERT'S CHOICE

Jess Boydon-Juckes is the RAF Stories manager at the RAF Museum

Members of the Women's Royal Air Force, Redhill, Surrey

For anyone inspired by the personal and poignant stories of RAF men and women, RAF Stories is an invaluable online archive: **rafstories.org**. Launched in 2018 as part of the RAF's centenary celebrations, the website has collected hundreds of audio and video contributions from veterans, serving personnel and families.

Thanks to a small museum team working alongside volunteers, the platform now features stories spanning every era – from the First World War through to present-day service, covering themes like bravery, love, humour and loss. You can filter stories by period, theme, rank, unit and location, using an interactive map to pinpoint personal histories across the globe.

Notably, the site embraces diversity – from Flight Lieutenant Ayla Holdom sharing her journey as a trans Search and Rescue pilot, to Suzanne and Emily Flynn's rare mother–daughter engineering legacy, and Kenya-born Honorary Air Commodore Veronica Moraa Pickering.

Additionally, it tackles stories that have often been omitted from official records, including the experiences of LGBTQ+ personnel who were affected by the ban on gay people serving in the armed forces that only ended in 2000.

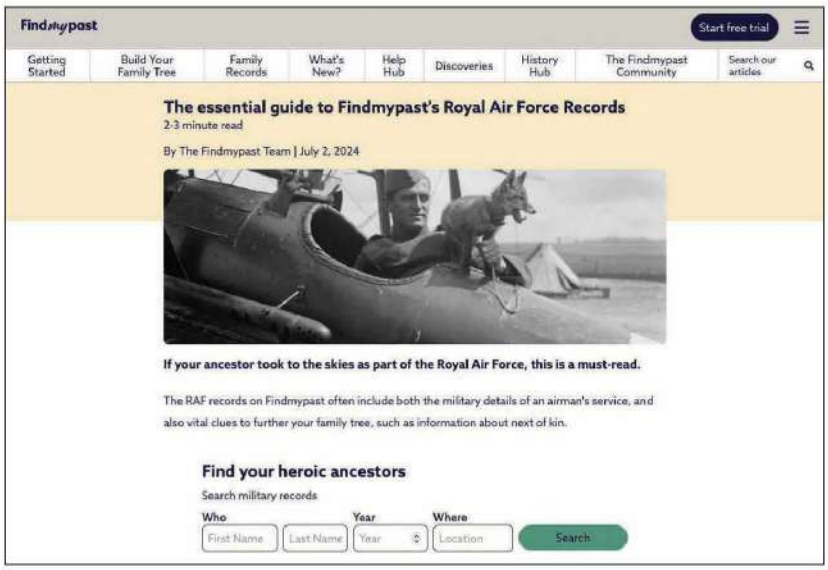
If you're researching a relative – or simply drawn to resonant first-hand accounts – then RAF Stories offers a rich, human-focused complement to service records. Better yet, it encourages user contributions: you can upload your own memories via the mobile app for iOS, and help ensure that these unique voices reach future generations.

GETTY IMAGES

RAF MUSEUM CASUALTY FORMS

w **casualtyforms.org**

During the First World War centenaries, the RAF Museum launched its Storyvault website where you can trawl various record collections, including casualty cards which give details of accidents, injuries and deaths by enemy action, as well as deaths from natural causes: **rafmuseumstoryvault.org.uk**. There's also this collection of 25,000 First World War 'casualty forms'. These contain details of service such as postings, periods of leave, promotions and decorations, in addition to injuries, deaths and those captured. And you can search the online database by name, regiment/corps or date of birth.



FINDMYPAST

w **findmypast.co.uk/blog/family-records/tracing-great-war-airmen-and-women**

Much of the RAF and related material on Findmypast was created in partnership with TNA. Highlights include the collection 'British Royal Air Force, Airmen's Service Records 1912–1939', with almost 343,000 records detailing service number, rank and military training, as well as birthplace, occupation and marriage. There's also an index to 31,161 Women's RAF records, each linking to the original available via TNA's website, while 'British Royal Air Force, Officers' Service Records 1912–1920' has more than 101,000 officers. The original RAF muster roll is also here (and elsewhere), and contains the name, service number and rank of every man serving in April 1918.

Go Further

Nine more sites to take your research higher

ARMY FLYING MUSEUM

w **armyflying.com**

The museum, which is located in Middle Wallop, Hampshire, focuses on British Army aviation.

FLEET AIR ARM MUSEUM

w **fleetairarm.com**

The Royal Navy museum at Yeovilton, Somerset, boasts more than two million records.

FORCES WAR RECORDS

w **uk.forceswarrecords.com/medals/uk**

On this page you can browse medals open to airmen and officers.

INTERNET ARCHIVE

w **tinyurl.com/arch-raf-denis**

Here you can read an official history detailing the role of the RAF during the Second World War.

NATIONAL LIBRARY OF SCOTLAND

w **tinyurl.com/nls-raf-officers**

The NLS has digitised lists of RAF officers from 1919–1922 and the Second World War.

ROYAL AIR FORCES ASSOCIATION

w **rafa.org.uk/blog/2024/08/31/your-raf-family-history/**

WDYTYA? Magazine contributor Phil Tomaselli details some of the sources open to researchers.

THE AERODROME

w **theaerodrome.com**

Learn about First World War aces and aircraft.

THE GREAT WAR AVIATION SOCIETY

w **greatwaraviation.org**

This group seeks to research, preserve and share information about a "trailblazing era in global aviation". Some of the material on the website is only open to members, but there are fascinating free articles in the 'Knowledge' section.

THE ROYAL FLYING CORPS 1914–18

w **airwar1.org.uk**

Here you can read transcribed diaries kept by three pioneering officers of No. 2 Squadron.

Royal Hospital Chelsea Prize Books

Phil Tomaselli explains why this newly digitised collection can reveal unique information about a soldier forebear

Digitised records for British soldiers before about the middle of the 19th century are relatively rare; the exceptions are surviving pension records, the musters from the Napoleonic Wars (1803–1815) available on Ancestry via **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/60546**, the medal roll from the Battle of Waterloo (1815) and a few specialist lists. So the recent addition of the Royal Hospital Chelsea prize books to TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**) should be warmly welcomed.

The collection contains lists of entitlements to shares of prize money won in military actions between 1779 and 1858, including lesser-known campaigns such as the Fourth Anglo-Dutch War (1780–1784), wars against Indian states, the capture of Caribbean islands, and the 1840 Syrian Campaign. The Napoleonic Wars, the American War of Independence (1775–1783) and the Crimean War (1853–1856) are among the larger campaigns featured in the new collection.

> The captured goods were valued and the total split among the soldiers

Just Deserts

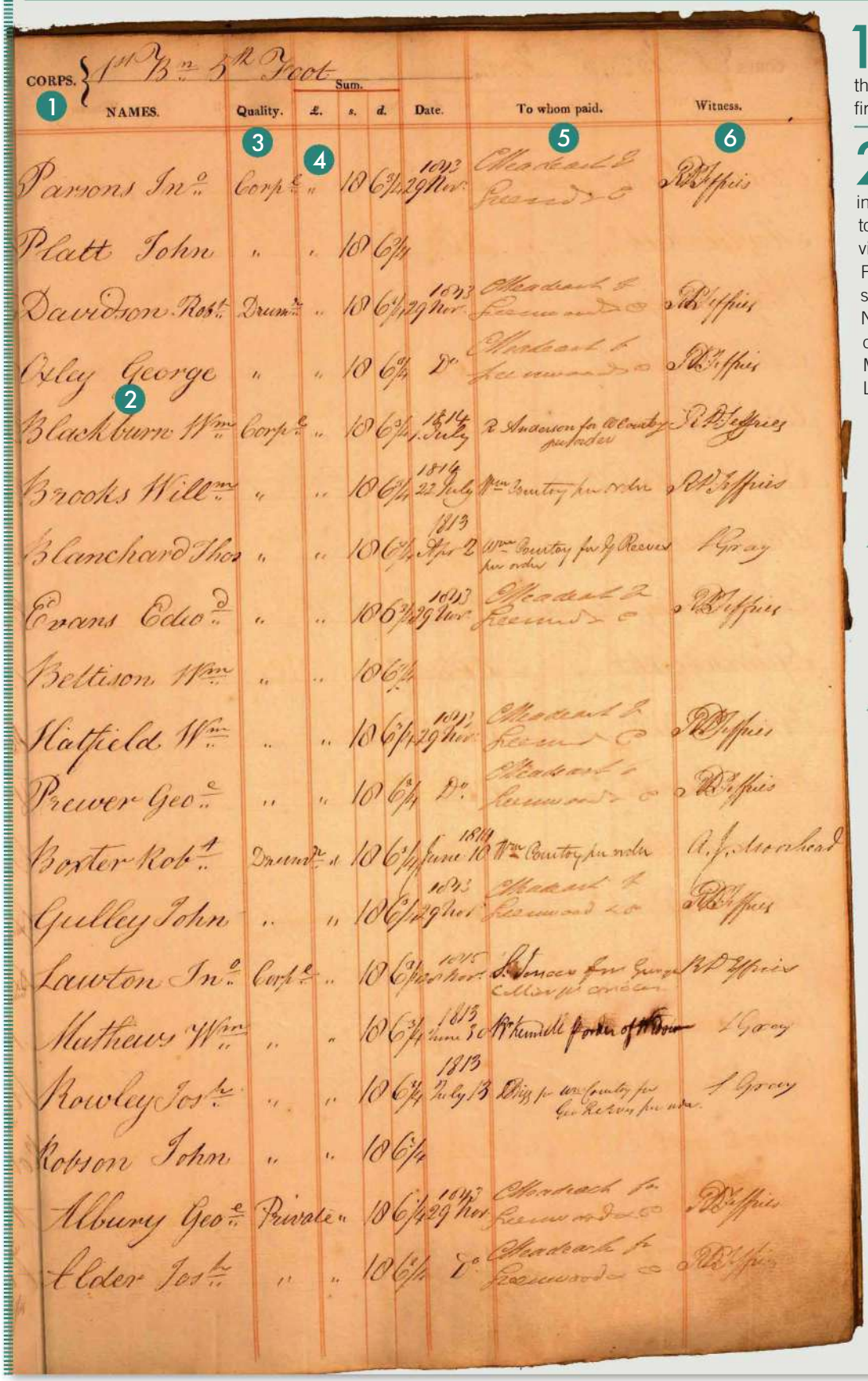
Prize money, now usually considered a naval tradition, was money paid to men who'd participated in a military venture that captured enemy weapons, equipment or goods. In part it was a reward for winning, an encouragement for officers and men to be more daring, and an attempt to limit looting. The captured goods were valued and the total split among the soldiers in a set ratio according to rank. Accounts were kept by 'prize agents' who distributed the money accordingly. Major General Lord Arthur Wellesley (later the 1st Duke of Wellington) received £1,844 in prize money (nearly £150,000 at today's value) for his part in the Second Battle of Copenhagen (1807), while captains received nearly £94 (£7,400) and privates, like Private Simon Roberts of the 3rd Foot Guards, received £3 8s (just under £300 today). After Waterloo the 1st Duke of Wellington received the largest share of £61,178 3s 5½d (£4.9 million today), and a private got £2 11s 4d (about £200).

Because a lot of money (although a small part of the total for most actions) remained unclaimed, the unpaid money and the accounts were transferred into the care of the Royal Hospital Chelsea in London. The accounts are now held by The National Archives (TNA; **nationalarchives.gov.uk**) at Kew in series WO 164. Many remained open for several decades after ▶

GETTY IMAGES

Prize Book

This page from the prize-money accounts of the 1st Battalion, 5th Foot, is held by The National Archives and available on TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**)



CORPS. 1st Bn 5th Foot

NAMES.	Quality.	Sum. £.	s.	d.	Date.	To whom paid.	Witness.
Parsons Jno	Corpl	"	10	6¾	1813 29 Nov	Officers & Freemd	R Jeffries
Platt John	"	"	10	6¾			
Davidson Robt	Drum	"	10	6¾	1813 29 Nov	Officers & Freemd	R Jeffries
Oxley George	"	"	10	6¾	Do	Officers & Freemd	R Jeffries
Blackburn Wm	Corpl	"	10	6¾	1814 1 July	R Anderson for County per order	R Jeffries
Brooks Willm	"	"	10	6¾	1814 22 July	Wm Courtey for order	R Jeffries
Blanchard Thos	"	"	10	6¾	1813 Apr 2	Wm Courtey for J Reeves per order	R Gray
Evans Edwd	"	"	10	6¾	1813 29 Nov	Officers & Freemd	R Jeffries
Bettison Wm	"	"	10	6¾			
Hatfield Wm	"	"	10	6¾	1813 29 Nov	Officers & Freemd	R Jeffries
Prewer Geo	"	"	10	6¾	Do	Officers & Freemd	R Jeffries
Boxter Robt	Drum	"	10	6¾	1814 June 10	Wm Courtey per order	A J Merchard
Gulley John	"	"	10	6¾	1813 29 Nov	Officers & Freemd	R Jeffries
Lawton Jno	Corpl	"	10	6¾	1815 Nov	J Spencer for Gunr Collier pd order	R Jeffries
Matthews Wm	"	"	10	6¾	1813 June 30	Rd Kendall for order of the Com	R Gray
Rowley Jos	"	"	10	6¾	1813 2 July 13	Dig p Wm Courtey for Geo Reeves per order	R Gray
Robson John	"	"	10	6¾			
Albury Geo	Private	"	10	6¾	1813 29 Nov	Officers & Freemd	R Jeffries
Elder Jos	"	"	10	6¾	Do	Officers & Freemd	R Jeffries

1 Corps

The unit is identified, then the soldiers are named in the first column below.

2 Blackburn Wm

You can use the information in the prize books to trace a soldier's career via other online records. For example, Findmypast says that William enlisted in November 1797; Ancestry's collection 'UK, British Army Muster Books and Pay Lists, 1812–1817' reveals that he went missing while retreating from Madrid; and another prize record on TheGenealogist tells us that he was a prisoner of war.

3 Quality

The soldiers' rank is recorded in this column. The corporals, drummers and privates here all received the same sum.

4 Sum

The ditto mark in the "£" column indicates that the figure is recorded on a previous page. The actual amount is £6 10s 6¾d (nearly £400 today).

5 To Whom Paid

Some of the prizes were paid to legal firms who helped claimants with their applications.

6 Witness

The witnesses aren't regimental officers, so are possibly officials of the Royal Hospital Chelsea.

The Royal Hospital Chelsea and the rotunda in Ranelagh Gardens, 1751

the original payments, explaining the apparently extreme dates of some of the entries. However, most of the payments in any volume tend to fall within 5–10 years of the opening date.

On occasion, men or their relations applied after the legal limit for claims, and in a lot of cases the expense of providing supporting documentation for a claim made by a relative was greater than the amount being claimed (especially for privates), and some applicants discovered that another family member had claimed the prize money already. But the claim itself might provide genealogical information, especially if the money was sent to a relative.

TheGenealogist has digitised and indexed the collection in its 'Military' section under the name 'Royal Hospital Chelsea: Prize Records', available to subscribers at the 'Diamond' level costing £49.95 a month or £169.95 a year. The search engine allows you to look for a particular war for which there are records, but note that records from the Peninsular War (1808–1814) are indexed separately from the Napoleonic Wars, although it was part of the same conflict. It should also be noted that the original name was the Peninsula War, and that's the spelling used on many of the records and TheGenealogist's indexing, so using 'Peninsular' as a search term won't work.

Beautiful Clarity

The search engine is fairly straightforward and images of the documents are beautifully clear. If you're looking for someone you think might have been a soldier but don't know the regiment, it's possible to search for your relation's name in only a specified period – although with common names, expect a lot of possible answers!

Knowing which war he fought in, especially in later campaigns (after about 1820), is also easier if you know his regimental number. The individual records (both summary and image) don't provide the TNA reference, but searching TNA's online catalogue Discovery (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**) using the name of the campaign (eg Lucknow or Peninsular) and regimental name or number (eg 4th Foot/King's Own Royal Lancasters) should tell you. At time of writing the physical records can still be consulted. In addition, remember that the name William may have been recorded as "Wm", so you may need to search for that spelling as well.

Widows or other relations are mentioned when they claim prize money. For example, an 1864 record shows that Margaret Smith claimed her late husband's share (he died in 1858 serving in the 2nd Regiment of Dragoon Guards) and received half of it (17s), while the soldiers who took part in the capture of the French ship *L'Esperance* in 1809 have their physical appearances noted, including height, complexion, hair and eye colour, and shape of face. You never know what information you will find.

TOP TIP!

At the time, dead soldiers' service records were routinely destroyed. If your relation had an unusual name, prize books may reveal their regiment so you can check musters etc.

PHIL TOMASELLI is both an expert in military family history and a regular contributor to *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*

Resources

Take your research further

WEBSITES

ANCESTRY

w **ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/60546**

The website has searchable records of British troops in the collection 'UK, British Army Muster Books and Pay Lists, 1812–1817'. Other military records from the period are available on Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**) and TheGenealogist (**thegenealogist.co.uk**).

DISCOVERY

w **discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C14371**

Searching The National Archives' online catalogue for place, campaign or regiment within series WO 164 ('Royal Hospital Chelsea: Prize Records') gives you a general view of the whole record.

PRIZE MONEY IN THE ARMY

w **tinyurl.com/jayne-prizes**

Jayne Davis, an author of historical romances, has a good explanation of the prize process on her blog.

GETTY IMAGES

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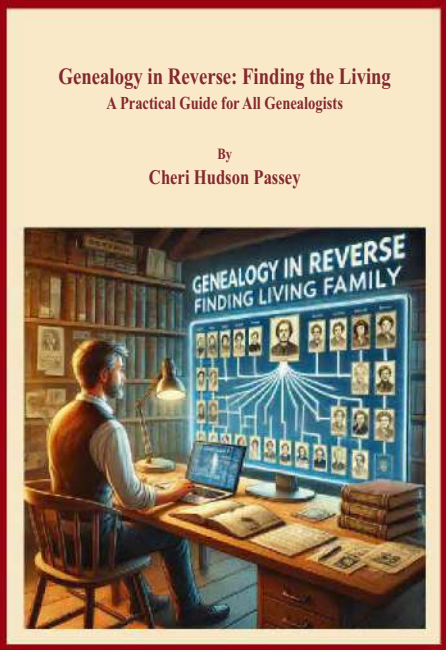

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Q&A

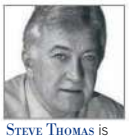
Our team of experts offers tips and inspiration Edited By Claire Vaughan

Paul Blake is the author of *Tracing Your Insolvent Ancestors*

Katherine Cobb is a member of AGRA based in Somerset

Debbie Kennett is the author of *DNA and Social Networking*

Jayne Shrimpton is a professional dress historian and portrait specialist



Steve Thomas is a genealogist with over 20 years' experience

Phil Tomaselli is a military family history expert and author

Alison Toplis is a dress and textile historian

Why did my forebear Giles Sim's death take so long to register?

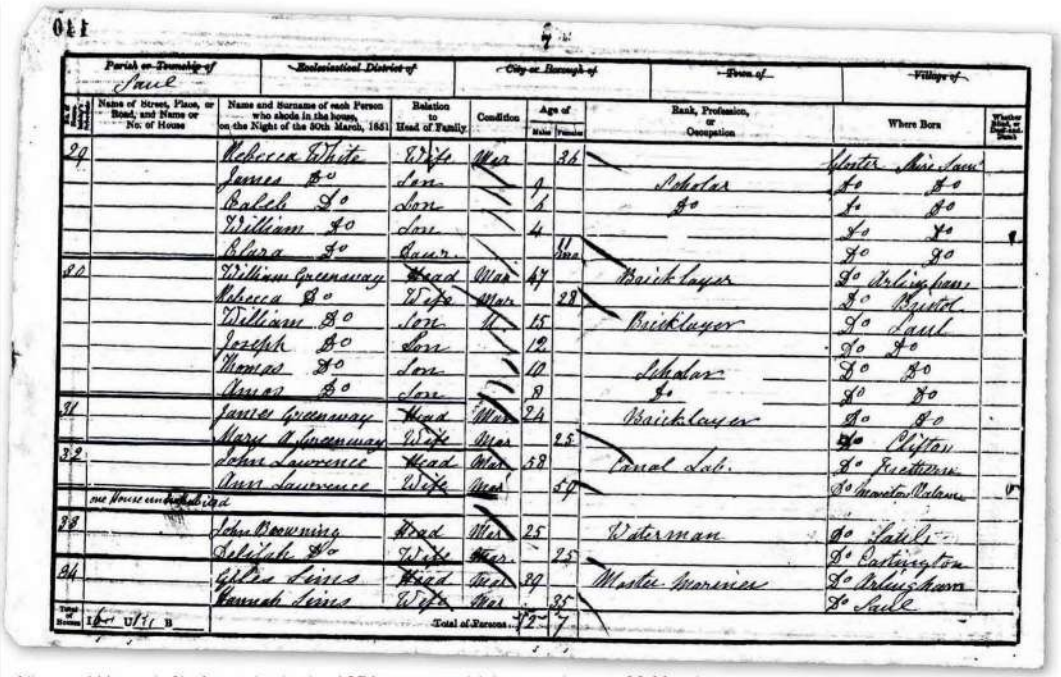
Q My 4x great grandfather, James White (1790–1878), was part owner of a barge named the *George*. In 1848, four of his crew – Giles Sim, John Browning, William Cooke and Isaac Knowles – were returning from Gloucester, drunk, and Sim fell overboard (at 10.30pm the landlady of the Passage House heard a splash). His body was never found, according to the newspapers.

Giles was married to Hannah White, James' daughter. The reports say he left a wife and three children. However, Giles and Hannah appear on the 1841 and 1851 censuses with Giles recorded as a (master) mariner.

In 1858, Giles's death was registered and his probate was approved.

Have I got the correct Giles Sim? Why did it take so long to register the death?

Nigel Long



Giles and Hannah Sim's entries in the 1851 census, which was taken on 30 March

A A more obvious solution is that Giles Sim, after falling into the Severn, made it to the bank, slept off his hangover and showed his face a few days later. He is, after all, living at his home in Passage Road three years later when the 1851 census was taken, next door to John Browning. Passage Road is close by where the barge was moored outside the Passage House.

The 1858 entry in the calendar of wills says specifically that Giles Sim died on 23 March 1858. The date of death is always included, and Hannah, as relict and sole executrix, swore by oath to the facts in the probate.

Giles and Hannah Sim appear to have been childless right up to the 1851 census when Hannah is 35 years old. There does not appear to be any issue recorded after this, but Giles' unmarried sister, Elizabeth, had three illegitimate children – John, 12; Jacob, 11; and Harriett, five – living in the Union Workhouse in Eastington while she, claiming to be 10 years younger than she was, appears as a single domestic servant in Westbury-on-Severn.

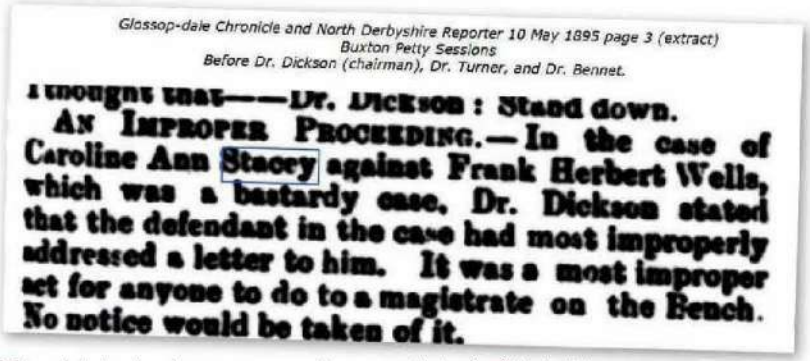
Of course, we do not know who told the reporter that Giles and Hannah had three children in 1848. Perhaps on occasion Elizabeth or the union placed their nephews and niece in their care. A search in Poor Law records and vestry minutes for entries around this time may shed more light on the children to see if they are indeed the three children who are alluded to.

Steve Thomas

HAVE YOU HIT A BRICK WALL? Please email your questions or family photographs to the following address: **wdytyaquestions@ourmedia.co.uk**

If selected, your query will be answered on these pages. Please note that we receive a large volume of correspondence each month, and cannot reply to each message individually. You are more likely to receive a response if you keep the question and background information concise (no more than 150 words), with a clear goal of enquiry.

Where can I find out about the outcome of a bastardy case?



Glossop-dale Chronicle and North Derbyshire Reporter 10 May 1895 page 3 (extract)
Buxton Petty Sessions
Before Dr. Dickson (chairman), Dr. Turner, and Dr. Bennet.

I thought that——Dr. Dickson: Stand down.

An Improper Proceeding.—In the case of Caroline Ann Stacey against Frank Herbert Wells, which was a bastardy case, Dr. Dickson stated that the defendant in the case had most improperly addressed a letter to him. It was a most improper act for anyone to do to a magistrate on the Bench. No notice would be taken of it.

This article in a local newspaper provides a crucial clue for Chris to follow up

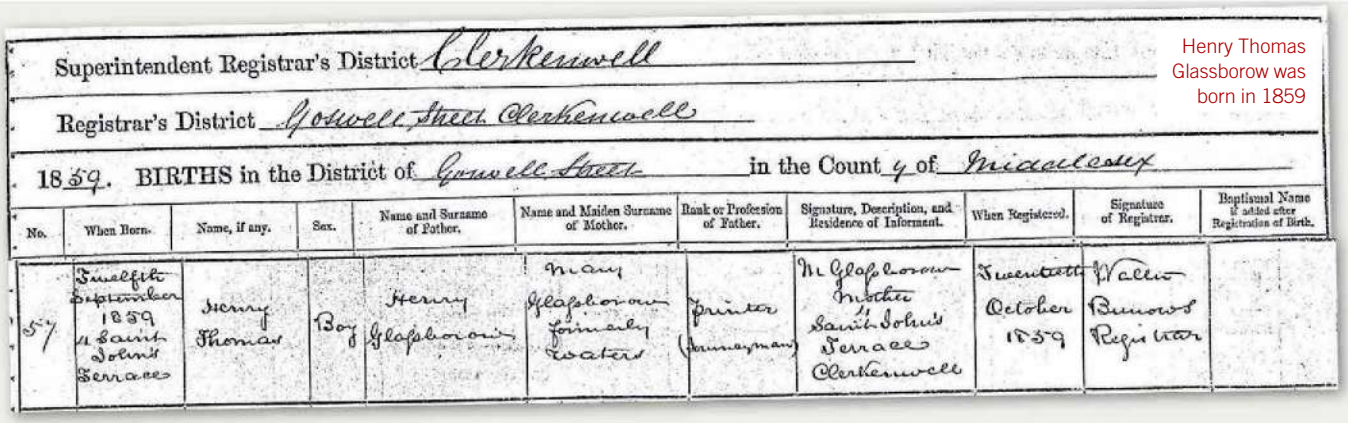
Q Actor Diane Morgan's recent episode of *Who Do You Think You Are?* featured bastardy cases brought by her Scottish 4x great grandmother, and revealed that there are records detailing how such cases went. I found a newspaper article about a bastardy case for my grandfather, Frank Herbert Stacey, which took place in May 1895, 11 months after he was born. I am searching for records of the case's outcome, if there are any. Where should I start looking?
Chris Hussey

A Parish and state were never enthusiastic about having to pay for the maintenance of an illegitimate child. From the early 17th century, in England and Wales, the Poor Laws stipulated that the father bore much of the responsibility. If he was unwilling to voluntarily accept this, then the quarter sessions could examine the case and issue a bastardy or affiliation order compelling him to do so. By the time of the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act and the introduction of Poor Law unions, most cases would have been referred to the petty-sessions courts. Regrettably, records of the petty sessions do not survive as well as those for the quarter sessions, although this improved towards the end of the 19th century.

Records of the quarter sessions and petty sessions are held locally, usually at the relevant county record office. Many cases have been indexed and extracted by individuals and societies, and some may have been published.

The 1874 Births and Deaths Registration Act permitted, but did not require, the registration of an illegitimate child in the name of the father, if he gave permission. Unsurprisingly, the Act was little used.

The extract regarding your grandfather, from an article published in the *Glossop-dale Chronicle and North Derbyshire Reporter* on 10 May 1895, is clearly headed "Buxton Petty Sessions". It would therefore be in this court that the full case was heard, but the details of the hearing and judgment were apparently not published. Searching the catalogue of Derbyshire Record Office at **calmview.derbyshire.gov.uk/CalmView/advanced.aspx?src=CalmView.Catalog** it seems the registers between 1884 and 1911 have not survived, but ask the archivist.
Paul Blake



Superintendent Registrar's District Clerkenwell

Registrar's District Goswell Street Clerkenwell

1859. BIRTHS in the District of Goswell Street in the County of Middlesex

No.	When Born.	Name, if any.	Sex.	Name and Surname of Father.	Name and Maiden Surname of Mother.	Rank or Profession of Father.	Signature, Description, and Residence of Informant.	When Registered.	Signature of Registrar.	Baptismal Name if added after Registration of Birth.
57	Twelfth September 1859 11 Saint John's Terrace	Henry Thomas	Boy	Henry Glasborow	Mary Glasborow formerly Waters	Printer (Journeyman)	M. Glasborow Mother 11 Saint John's Terrace Clerkenwell	Twentieth October 1859	Walter Burrows Registrar	

Henry Thomas Glassborow was born in 1859

Does my DNA result mean my great grandfather was illegitimate?

Q My great grandfather, Henry Thomas Glassborow (born 1859), has Henry Glassborow (born 1832) and Mary Waters (born 1834) listed as his parents on his birth certificate.

Myself, my sister, a first cousin and second cousin all have strong DNA matches (up to 50 cM) to some fourth cousins on AncestryDNA (**ancestry.co.uk/dna**) through Henry's parents. Yet none through Mary Waters.

The great grandson of Louise Emily Glassborow (born 1844), Henry Snr's sister, has a 40 cM match to me, a 90 cM match to my sister and a 127 cM match to my first cousin.

Is Henry Thomas really Louise's son?
Nigel Glassborow

A The lack of any DNA matches through Mary Waters' line is not necessarily an indicator that the documentary research is wrong. It may just be that no one from this line has yet tested.

The best way of investigating this issue is to use the 'What Are the Odds? plus' tool at DNA Painter (**dnapainter.com**). There are tutorials and FAQs provided on the website. This tool allows you to work with a group of DNA matches and try to identify how you are connected to this DNA match cluster. You would need to enter all the DNA matches of the Glassborow descendants, including the more distant fourth and fifth cousins, and how much DNA they share with you. You could add the hypothesis that you are descended from Louise Emily Glassborow, and see if the amount of DNA shared is consistent with this hypothesis. You can also test alternative hypotheses and even ask the tool to generate hypotheses for you. WATO plus does all of the complicated maths of working out the compound probabilities. In this way it might be possible to confirm or reject your hypothesis. If you have access to the DNA accounts of your sister and cousin then you could also construct similar WATO charts for them.

If you've not already done so, you might also like to consider uploading your results to MyHeritage DNA (**myheritage.com/dna**) to see if there are additional matches within its database. These matches could also be added to the WATO trees.
Debbie Kennett

Picture Analysis

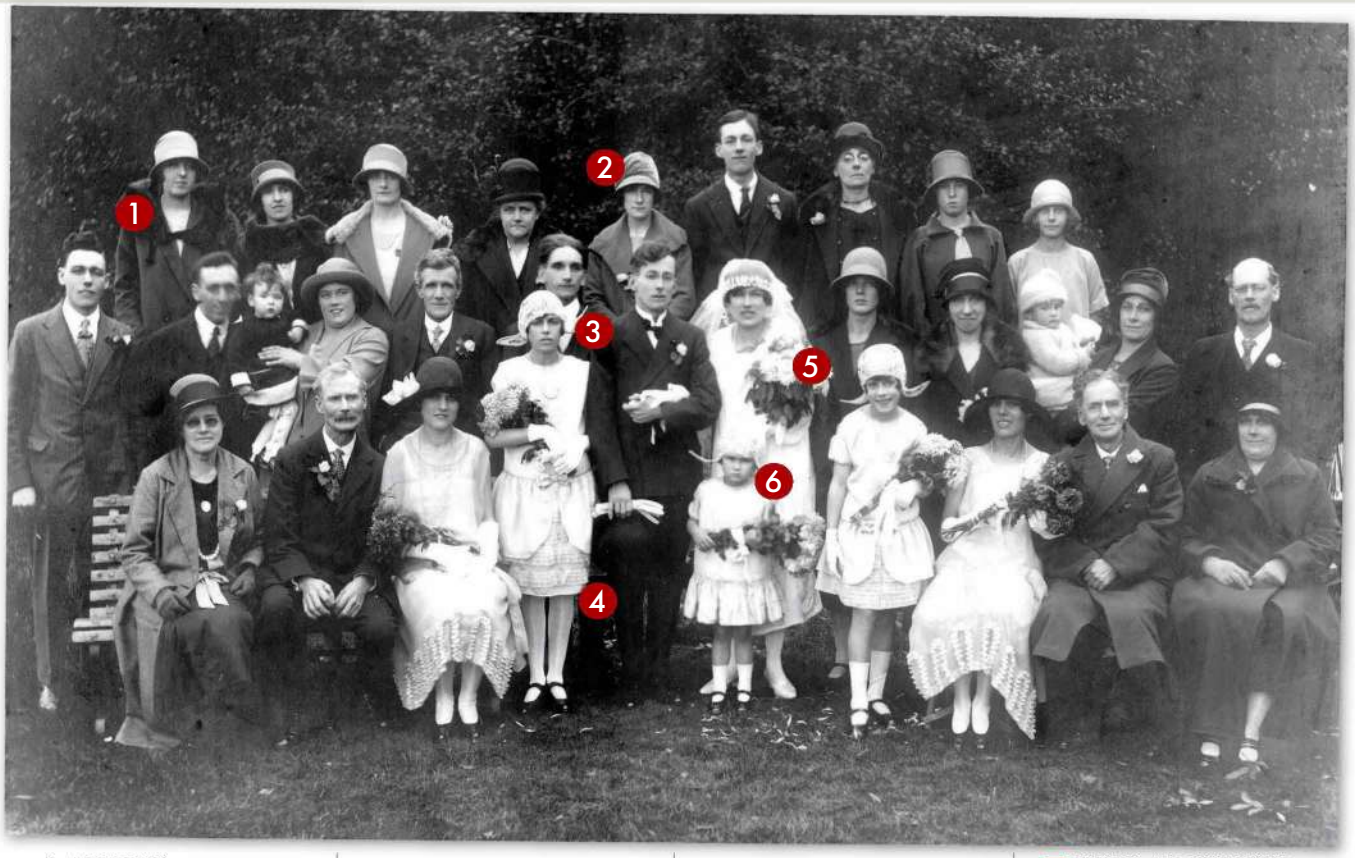
When was this wedding photograph taken?

Q I'm trying to work out whose wedding this is. The lady fourth from the left on the back row is Mary Wright, my great grandmother, who died in 1933. The bridesmaid in front, fourth from right, is her niece Doris Wright (born 1918). Doris's grandson says that she can't be any older than 10 years old here. When do you think this photograph was taken?
Susan Hall

A This photograph was taken by a professional photographer, but without any printed photographer/studio information, we must go by the visual image alone. Answering your query rests on accurately dating the fashions on show, and judging from everyone's appearance, the styles of clothing and accessories reveal a wedding that occurred c1925–1928.

Everyone is neatly dressed. The younger adults and teenagers, predictably, are most up to date in their garments and hats, while the older figures are more soberly attired. The men all wear 'Sunday best' two- or three-piece tailored lounge suits, many sporting floral buttonholes for the event, and the ladies have modish wide-lapelled coats (and possibly some suits) over good blouses.

In a group wedding photograph, the bride's family were usually positioned on her side; the groom's on his. However, there might be some shuffling about, to accommodate the varying ages, genders and relative importance of those present. You have identified Doris, the bridesmaid standing fourth from right. Born in 1918, Doris would have been seven to 10 years old at this wedding: perfect. Hopefully the clear date will enable you to identify the wedding couple and more of the guests.
Jayne Shrimpton



1 Ladies' outerwear
The ladies' substantial outer garments and the presence of several fur collars or stoles could suggest that this wedding occurred during late autumn, winter or early spring.

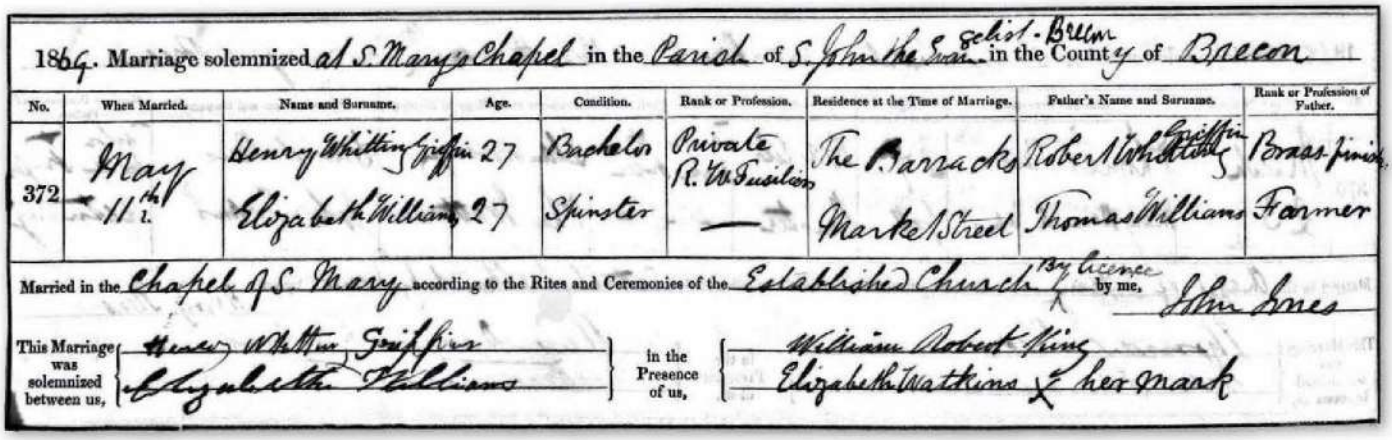
2 Hats
The relatively plain, deep-crowned felt cloche hats with small brims and the wider-brimmed cloche-style 'picture hats' worn by the bridesmaids confirm a year of at least 1925.

3 Groom's jacket
The groom's lounge jacket expresses the new boxy, double-breasted mid-to-late decade cut and is accessorised with formal starched collar, bow tie, bowler hat and white gloves – all of them popular for weddings in the 1920s.

4 Trousers
The groom's trousers follow the short style with narrow hems typical of much of the 1920s. By c1930, trousers were becoming wider and longer.

5 Bridal dress
A special white dress with a knee- or calf-length hemline was popular for brides in the 1920s, with a veiled headdress worn low over the forehead.

6 Children
The child bridesmaids wear wired Dutch-style winged caps often seen at 1920s weddings.



1869. Marriage solemnized at S. Mary's Chapel in the Parish of S. John the Evan. Schist. Brecon in the County of Brecon

No.	When Married.	Name and Surname.	Age.	Condition.	Rank or Profession.	Residence at the Time of Marriage.	Father's Name and Surname.	Rank or Profession of Father.
372	May 11th	Henry Whitting Griffin	27	Bachelor	Private R. W. Fusiliers	The Barracks	Robert Whitting Griffin	Brass-finisher
		Elizabeth Williams	27	Spinster	—	Market Street	Thomas Williams	Farmer

Married in the Chapel of S. Mary according to the Rites and Ceremonies of the Established Church by Licence by me, John Jones

This Marriage was solemnized between us, Henry Whitting Griffin, Elizabeth Williams

in the Presence of us, William Robert King, Elizabeth Watkins her mark

How do I find a birth record for Henry Whitting?

Q Henry Whitting (c1839/1844–1894), my great great grandfather, was born in Rushden, Northampton, but I have never found a birth record, nor his entry on the 1851 census. His surname and year of birth differ on various documents. In 1858, at attestation, he's Whitting with an apparent age of 20, so was born in 1838.

In 1869, on his marriage record *(pictured)*, he's Whitting Griffin, aged 27, so was born in 1842; and in 1894, when he died, he's Whitting aged 50, so born 1844. The surname Whitting Griffin first appears when he married for both him and his stated father, Robert.

Karen Tocque

A I searched the censuses using both Griffin and Whitting (including variant spellings), initials instead of Henry's name, and for a Henry, any surname, born at Rushden. I found nothing in 1841 or 1851, although I did find him in the 1861 British Army Worldwide Index, stationed in Malta.

A search for the registration of Henry's birth, including any registered as male, was equally unsuccessful. There were several Henry Whitting registrations, but none at Wellingborough. This was not entirely surprising, as in the early years of civil registration some births went unregistered.

There is no sign of Henry's baptism at Rushden. However, the 1847 Post Office Directory shows that there were two Baptist and a Wesleyan chapel at Rushden; were the family nonconformists? Look for any registers for these chapels, either online, at Northamptonshire Archives (**tinyurl.com/nants-arch**) or at the chapels, if they still exist.

Returning to the censuses, in 1841, Mary Whiting, an innkeeper, aged 40, is listed together with Morris Whiting, age 25. They were still there in 1851, and married. There is no Henry, but might they be his parents?

Morris and Mary married in November 1841 in London, and in 1871 Henry gave London not Northamptonshire as his place of birth. I suggest you look for his birth/baptism in London instead.

Katherine Cobb

TOP TIP If the records don't 'add up' it may be because someone was trying to hide something, making it difficult to know which clues to believe and which are red herrings. In these cases, follow all lines of inquiry and keep notes of your research.

Is this a sweetheart brooch, and if so what does it mean?

Q I am hoping you can help me with this photograph. I'm guessing it was taken in the late 1890s, but I'm wondering about the brooch and chain/lanyard she is wearing. It has been suggested that it is a 'sweetheart' brooch, but I haven't heard of these. Was this a fashion of the time? The sitter, Emma Ripley, married in 1894; her husband was in the Royal Navy.

Linda Wells

A This studio portrait was probably taken in the early 1890s. The photographer, William James Robinson, was active at this address in Landport, Portsmouth, from around 1886 until 1898. The date is suggested by Emma's clothing, especially the pronounced vertical puff at the top of the sleeves, which would develop into wide puffed sleeves later in the decade. Her dress includes several throwbacks to 1880s fashion, including the use of contrasting fabrics with the velvet bands, the interesting asymmetrically fastening close-fitting bodice with the pronounced V-shape at the front and the use of watch chains across the bodice as a decorative feature, the one here appearing to have a tassel at the end. The sitter's hair, in a smooth neat chignon, helps to place the photo in the early 1890s.

Sweetheart badge brooches were manufactured from the late 1880s onwards, mostly in Birmingham and London, and peaked in popularity during the First World War. Miniature replicas of cap badges and insignia of regiments and units of the armed forces, they could be expensive jewels, commissioned from jewellers using precious stones, or simple metal or enamel brooches, widely available in shops used by service personnel. Serving men gave them as keepsakes to wives and girlfriends, or as a memento to their mothers, and they were worn as a talisman or lucky charm.

Emma could have such a brooch on her collar, the crown at the apex (which it is just possible to make out) indicating this, but I have been unable to track it down further.

Alison Toplis

Linda got in touch because she was curious about the brooch that her relation is wearing on her collar

Big Question

When and why did Henry Wood change his name to Henry Ratcliffe?

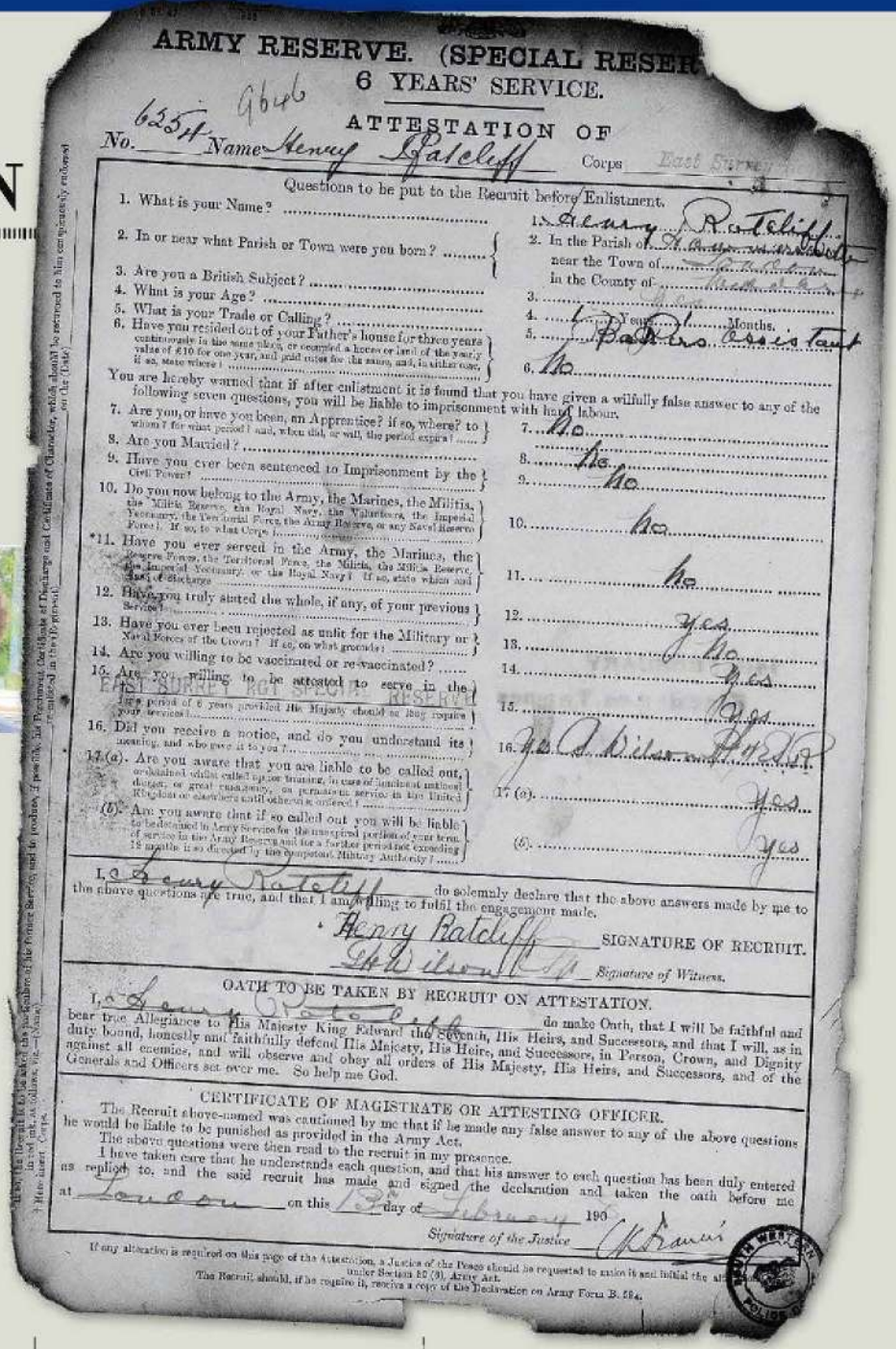
Q I am helping a friend research his ancestors. The family name is Wood: his father was born Wood, but the grandfather, Henry, was born Ratcliff(e) and appears to change his surname to Wood between 1908 and 1918.

He always stated that he was born on 11 January 1891 in Hammersmith and because of this I found him as Ratcliff, enlisting as a reservist (6254) in February 1908, and becoming permanent (9646) in August 1908. Between then and December 1908, he went AWOL several times and was eventually classed as "Deserted".

In 1919, he is listed as one of the new employees for the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, having been "recommended by the Army", but I have not been able to discover which regiment he served in during the First World War – presumably under the name Henry George Wood.

Heather Warman-Johnston

HEATHER WARMAN-JOHNSTON has hit a brick wall while researching a friend's tree



ARMY RESERVE. (SPECIAL RESERVE)
6 YEARS' SERVICE.
ATTESTATION OF
No. 6254 Name Henry Ratcliff Corps East Surrey

Questions to be put to the Recruit before Enlistment.

1. What is your Name? ... 1. Henry Ratcliff
2. In or near what Parish or Town were you born? ... 2. In the Parish of ... near the Town of ... in the County of ...
3. Are you a British Subject? ... 3. ...
4. What is your Age? ... 4. ... Years ... Months.
5. What is your Trade or Calling? ... 5. Bakers Assistant
6. Have you resided out of your Father's house for three years continuously in the same place, or occupied a house or land of the yearly value of £10 for one year, and paid rates for the same, and, in either case, if so, state where? ... 6. No

You are hereby warned that if after enlistment it is found that you have given a wilfully false answer to any of the following seven questions, you will be liable to imprisonment with hard labour.

7. Are you, or have you been, an Apprentice? If so, where? to whom? for what period? and, when did or will the period expire? ... 7. No
8. Are you Married? ... 8. No
9. Have you ever been sentenced to Imprisonment by the Civil Power? ... 9. No
10. Do you now belong to the Army, the Marines, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Royal Navy, the Volunteers, the Imperial Yeomanry, the Territorial Force, the Army Reserve, or any Naval Reserve Force? If so, to what Corps? ... 10. No
*11. Have you ever served in the Army, the Marines, the Regular Forces, the Territorial Force, the Militia, the Militia Reserve, the Imperial Yeomanry, or the Royal Navy? If so, state when and cause of discharge ... 11. No
12. Have you truly stated the whole, if any, of your previous Service? ... 12. Yes
13. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the Military or Naval Forces of the Crown? If so, on what grounds? ... 13. No
14. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? ... 14. Yes
15. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the Regular Forces for a period of 6 years (SPECIAL RESERVE) provided His Majesty should so long require your services? ... 15. Yes
16. Did you receive a notice, and do you understand its meaning, and who gave it to you? ... 16. Yes A Wilson Hosts
17. (a). Are you aware that you are liable to be called out, or detained whilst called upon training, in case of imminent national danger, or great emergency, on permanent service in the United Kingdom or elsewhere until otherwise ordered? ... 17. (a). Yes
(b). Are you aware that if so called out you will be liable to be detained in Army Service for the unexpired portion of your term of service in the Army Reserve and for a further period not exceeding 18 months if so directed by the competent Military Authority? ... (b). Yes

I, Henry Ratcliff do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagement made.

Henry Ratcliff SIGNATURE OF RECRUIT.
H Wilson Witness Signature of Witness.

OATH TO BE TAKEN BY RECRUIT ON ATTESTATION.

I, Henry Ratcliff do make Oath, that I will be faithful and bear true Allegiance to His Majesty King Edward the Seventh, His Heirs, and Successors, and that I will, as in duty bound, honestly and faithfully defend His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, in Person, Crown, and Dignity against all enemies, and will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs, and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me. So help me God.

CERTIFICATE OF MAGISTRATE OR ATTESTING OFFICER.

The Recruit above-named was cautioned by me that if he made any false answer to any of the above questions he would be liable to be punished as provided in the Army Act.
The above questions were then read to the recruit in my presence.
I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me at London on this 18th day of February 190

Signature of the Justice

If any alteration is required on this page of the Attestation, a Justice of the Peace should be requested to make it and initial the alt... under Section 80 (3), Army Act.
The Recruit should, if he requires it, receive a copy of the Declaration on Army Form B. 194.

Henry's damaged attestation form from when he enlisted in 1908

A There are copies of Henry (also known as Harry) Ratcliff's service record on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). Both show the same information, but are 'Burnt Records' (damaged in the Blitz) so may not be complete. Henry enlisted on 13 February 1908 in the Special Reserve (SR) Battalion, the East Surrey Regiment, giving his next of kin as his mother, Emily. The SR were part-time soldiers who did six months' full training then were paid a retainer and given occasional refresher training so that, in the event of war, they could be sent to fight immediately.

In August 1908, Henry transferred to a regular battalion of the East Surreys (a common practice). He was declared as having deserted on 23 December, when his battalion was in Plymouth, and that he took a large part of his kit with him. I suspect he went back to his mother in London for Christmas, and probably intended returning. I can find no mention of him, as a deserter, on the digital record – he should be in the *Police Gazette*. He might have bought his way out of the Army, but this would have been expensive.

From the railway company's reference to the Army, Henry must have served during the First World War. I wondered if he'd actually served on the railways with the Royal Engineers (RE). RE men working on the railways had their medal number prefixed by "WR". Using The National Archives' online research guide for British Army Medal Index Cards (1914–1920) at **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-mics**, I looked for Henry Wood, RE, of whom there were 48, but only six with a WR prefix who also didn't have, for example, a second name or initial. It would be worth you following this process, and looking for a service record or medal roll. I followed this process with Henry Ratcliff and found none – but I did find a Henry Ratcliffe, WR 203911, who'd also served in the Liverpool Regiment, Devon Regiment, Labour Corps, Medical Corps and 'ordinary' RE. He was awarded a Silver War Badge and the roll (on Ancestry) says he left the Army on 14 December 1918, plenty of time to get a railway job – except the reference presumably named him as Ratcliffe, and the roll states he was 34… His pension card (on Ancestry and Forces War Records; **uk.forceswarrecords.com**) gives his address as 53 Baudy Lane, Aintree. He might still be worth looking at.

The Army was supposed to check recruits to see if they were deserters, but didn't always do so. There are 37 Henry Ratcliff(e)s listed as having been awarded medals, and 570 Henry Woods. Not an easy task I'm afraid.

Phil Tomaselli

What can you tell me about William?

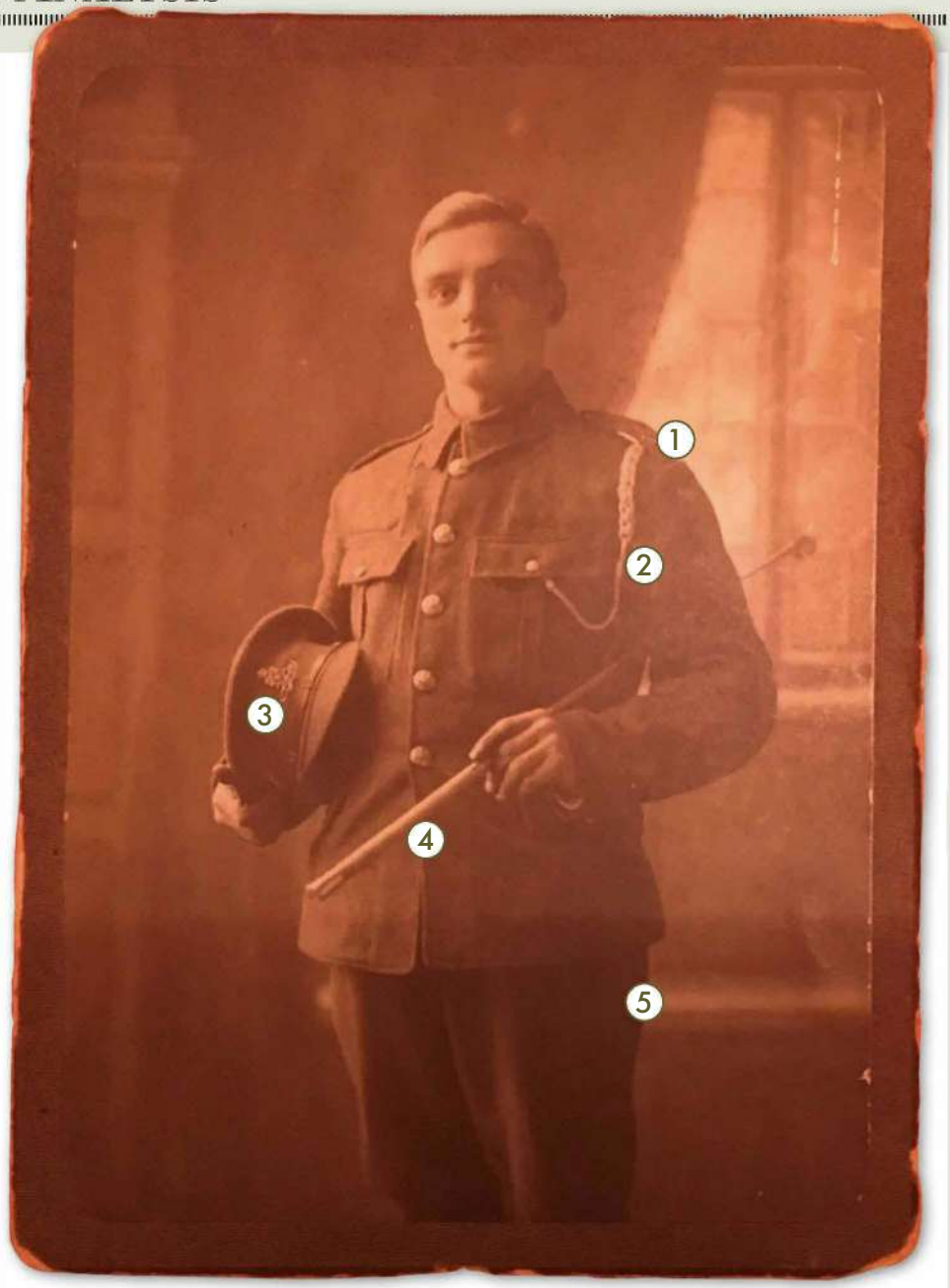
Q My grandfather, William Francis Young (1896–1949), enlisted in Bristol. He was in the war from 1914 to 1918, and was wounded and gassed. Can you tell anything from this photograph?
Stuart Leslie-Young

A This studio portrait of a Territorial Force (TF) Royal Artillery driver was probably taken shortly after his enlistment in 1910, in a photographic studio in Clifton, Bristol.

Knowing that he was a TF driver in 1915, and had survived the war, made it easier to find his Medal Index Card (MIC). The whole TF were renumbered in 1917, so I looked for a driver named Young with the right initials and two numbers, via The National Archives' (TNA's) research guide for British Army Medal Index Cards (1914–1920) at **tinyurl.com/tna-guide-mics**. I found only one: William F Young, Driver, Royal Field Artillery, original number 897, new number 825075. This second number shows that he served in one of three batteries of the 240th South Midland Brigade, based in Clifton and part of the South Midland Division

William's service record is available on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) and Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**). This and his MIC show that he first went to France on 29 March 1915, confirm he applied for a disability pension after the war (I checked for a casualty card for him, but all it says is that his records were transferred to SW Region) and note that he served in Italy.

His unit's War Diaries can be freely downloaded from TNA's catalogue (**discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk**) under WO 95/2749/3 (his service in France) and WO 95/4246 (Italy).
Phil Tomaselli



1 SHOULDER TITLE

The metal shoulder title has a large "T" above the curved title below. The "T" stands for "Territorial", and indicates that William is a part-time soldier training locally in the evenings and at weekends.

2 LANYARD

The white lanyard suggests that he's an artilleryman, but some other regiments also wore them, so the lanyard can't be taken on its own as proof.

3 CAP

The cap – indeed the whole uniform – looks immaculate. Even on its side, the badge is clearly that of the Royal Artillery, depicting an old-fashioned cannon with a crown above and a long scroll beneath.

4 CROP

The riding crop was standard issue with a stout handle and plaited leather thong three feet long with a cotton cracker on the end, and was used by a driver mounted on a horse.

5 BREECHES

The breeches, wider at the top and tapering downwards, indicate he's a horseman. He probably wore boots with detachable spurs and puttees wrapped round his lower legs to the knee.

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People Power

Rosemary Collins explains how volunteers transcribed a Victorian petition that helped to create a public park in East London

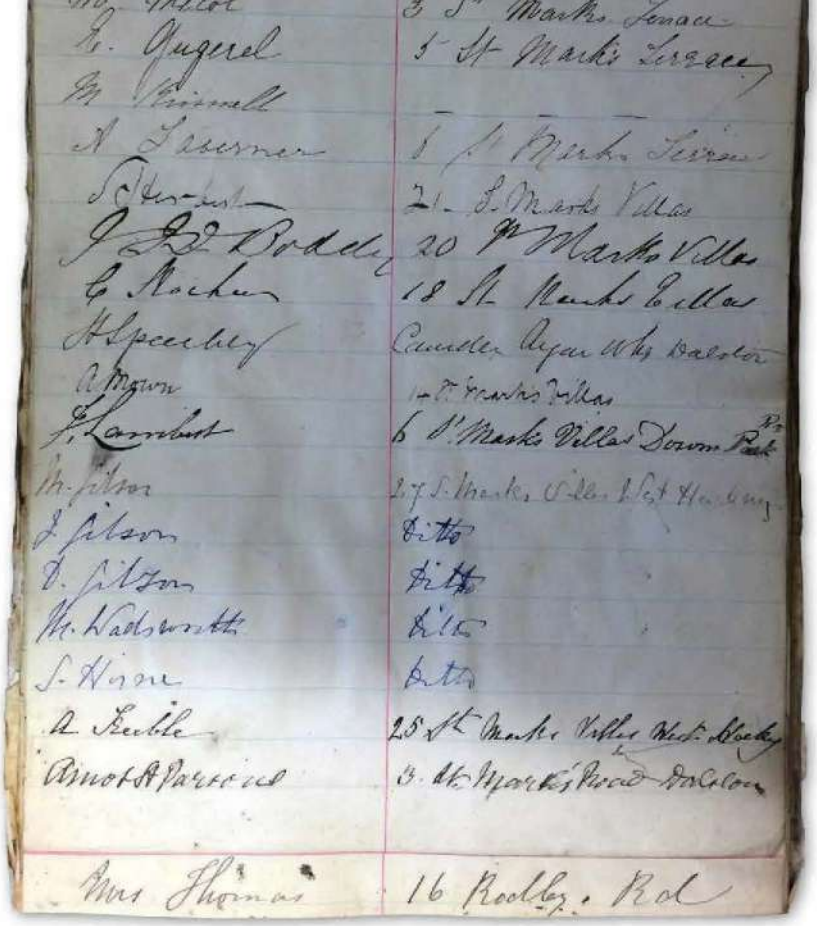
The 53-acre Clissold Park in Stoke Newington, Hackney, London, is a green space beloved by the local community. The park was originally attached to the 18th-century Clissold House. In 1882 the land was bought by the Church of England's Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who intended to sell it to developers. However, Joseph Beck (1829–1891) and John Rüntz (1818–1891), two businessmen and civic leaders, were determined to stop them, and founded the Clissold Park Preservation Committee. Through petitions, public meetings and articles in the press, they lobbied local parishes, local authorities and other bodies to contribute money towards the purchase of the park by the Metropolitan Board of Works. They succeeded, and the public park opened in 1889.

In the present day, local historian Amir Dotan runs the website Stoke Newington History (**stokenewingtonhistory.com**). In 2015, he was contacted by Isabella Shaw, Joseph's great great granddaughter. She owned a family scrapbook containing 175 letters, press clippings and documents that detail the campaign to establish the park.

Amir set up a website, Clissold Park Archive (**clissoldparkarchive.wordpress.com**), digitising the documents and telling the story of the campaign. Then, in 2016, he discovered something else at the London Metropolitan Archives (now The London Archives; **thelondonarchives.org**): an 1886 petition, one of three started by the committee, appealing to the Corporation of the City of London to help preserve the land. Amir photographed the petition at the archive, and in 2021 launched a crowdsourced project to transcribe it. In total, 40 volunteers transcribed all 11,000 signatures in just one month.

However, running the project took him a lot of time and effort: "I divided the work up between the 40 people, managed it with Excel, and aggregated all of the transcriptions. But some volunteers vanished, some were very slow, some finished very early, and I had to send lots of emails and messages on multiple social-media platforms to coordinate this group of strangers all working remotely. It was non-stop."

The finished transcription contains the names and addresses of everyone who signed the petition, as well as links to the original photos showing their signatures, and is available at **clissoldparkarchive.wordpress.com/petition/**. The transcription revealed some interesting findings. For example, Joseph's daughters helped to circulate the petition, and Amir thinks that they must have gone door-to-door because entire streets were covered.



One of the pages from the petition

"In addition, one of the volunteers spotted their own address in the petition, and was delighted to see that a former resident of their house was one of the petitioners."

Joseph's campaign was part of the national open-space movement

In Amir's opinion, the campaign shows us that 21st-century concerns about the loss of the environment and the need for green spaces in urban areas were familiar to our ancestors as well.

"Joseph Beck was raised in Stamford Hill and then lived in Stoke Newington, but lived through the Victorian building boom. An area that was primarily fields and meadows was built over within 25 years. His campaign was part of the national open-space movement to preserve what was referred to as the 'lungs of the metropolis'."

Tell your story

Share your local history project with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *rosemary.collins@ourmedia.co.uk*

Discover More

Clissold Park Archive

w **clissoldparkarchive.wordpress.com/petition/**

You can find out more about the campaign and view the transcribed petition at the website above. The Stoke Newington History site is at **stokenewingtonhistory.com**, and has accounts on Facebook, Flickr, Instagram, X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube.

THE BIG PICTURE

Celebrating our ancestors caught on camera

GETTY IMAGES

Horny History

Participants in the Horn Dance at Abbots Bromley, Staffordshire, brandish reindeer antlers, c1915

"The curious survival, debated of folklorists, to be witnessed every September in Abbots Bromley village, and known as the Horn Dance, is easily the most picturesque folk custom in the county," opined the *Staffordshire Advertiser* on 6 September 1913. We're not sure that "picturesque" is the first adjective to spring to mind when we look at this photograph, but their appearance is certainly striking.

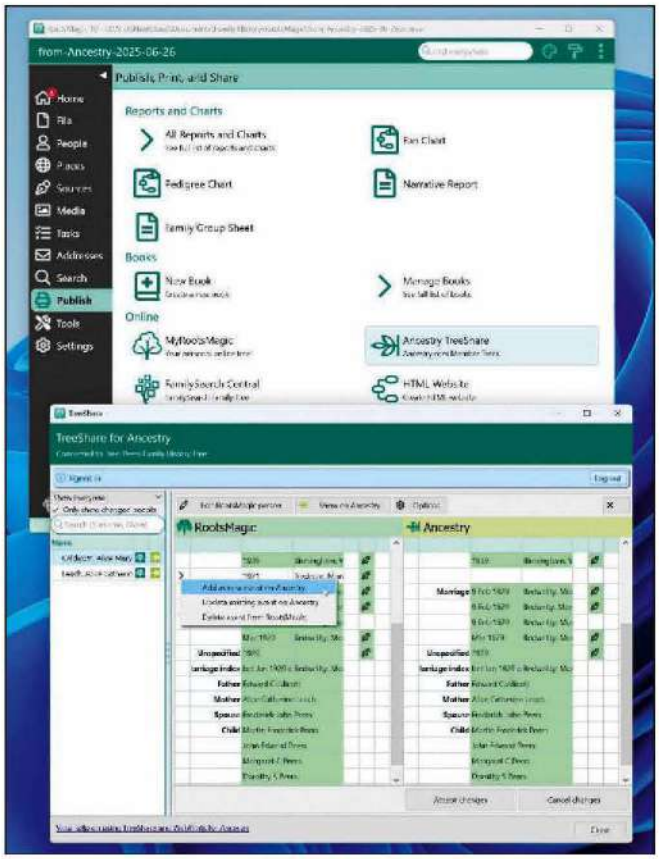
The dance still takes place in Abbots Bromley every year on Wakes Monday, the first Monday after 4 September, and starts from St Nicholas' Parish Church, which was built c1300.

The performers follow a 10-mile route through the village. Six of them carry reindeer antlers that may have come from Scotland or Scandinavia, and are housed in St Nicholas' Parish Church the rest of the year; the other four dress up as a Fool, a Hobby Horse, a Bowman and Robin Hood's beloved Maid Marian. Two musicians accompany them, playing the accordion and the triangle.

The Horn Dance is thought to have occurred since at least the early 13th century. As is so often the case with folk traditions, the reason it began is lost to the mists of time, and it will have mutated over the centuries; it may have started as a pagan fertility rite, or to celebrate a successful hunt or medieval hunting rights, or the harvest.

The earliest written record is Robert Plot's *The Natural History of Staffordshire* (1686), in which he describes "a sort of sport… call'd the Hobby-horse dance" that in addition to the Hobby Horse features "6 others, carrying on their shoulders as many Rain deers heads". Spectators were asked for financial donations, "with which Mony… they not only repaired their Church but kept their poore too".

This year's dance is scheduled for 8 September, according to the parish council (**abbotsbromley.com/information/horn_dance/**). Plot's book is free from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-staffs-plot**, and you can learn more on local-history website The Red Haired Stokie (**theredhairedstokie.co.uk/the-abbots-bromley-horn-dance-britains-oldest-folk-tradition/**).



Access your Ancestry tree offline – for free

Nick Peers reveals how to use and update your Ancestry tree without an active subscription

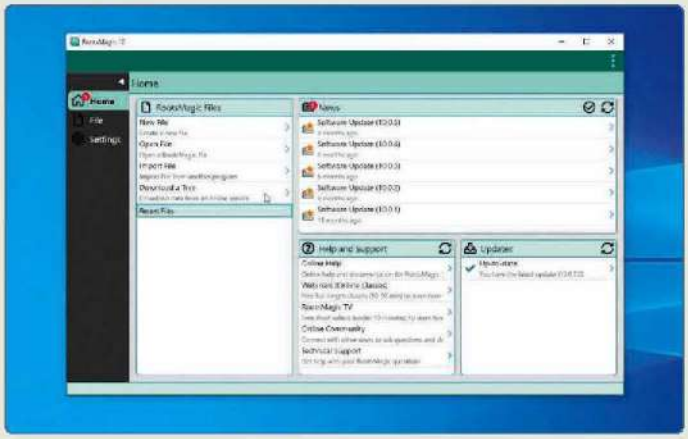
Subscribers to Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) will be only too aware that if their subscription lapses, they can't access any documents they've already attached to the people in their tree. Ancestry's recently launched 'Preserve My Tree' membership option restores access to those documents, but at a monthly cost of £3. However, there's a way you can download your entire Ancestry tree – including all record details, source citations and images – to your PC or Mac for free, even if your subscription lapsed several months ago.

The solution lies in installing the free tree-building software RootsMagic – go to **rootsmagic.co.uk** and click the 'Try RootsMagic Essentials' link in the menu bar to fill in your details and download the set-up file (pick the 64-bit download if you're a Windows user). Once done, you can follow our walkthrough to download your current Ancestry tree and all its content to a RootsMagic file.

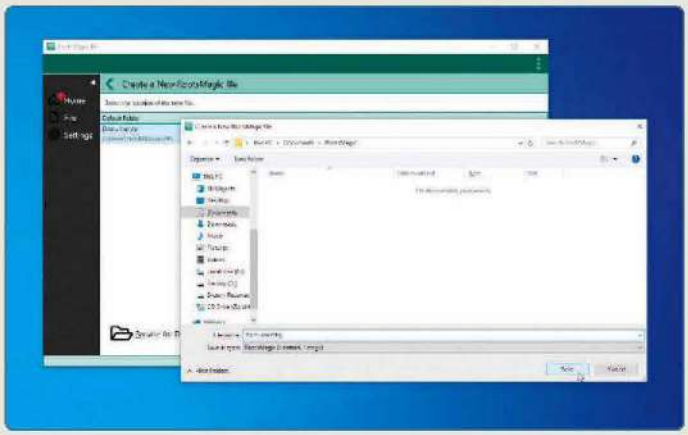
If you pay to upgrade to the full version of RootsMagic (starting at £29.95) then you can use the program's own hints feature to review – and incorporate – other records into your tree, even without an active subscription. Note that only those records that are marked as hints are accessible.

TOP TIP!

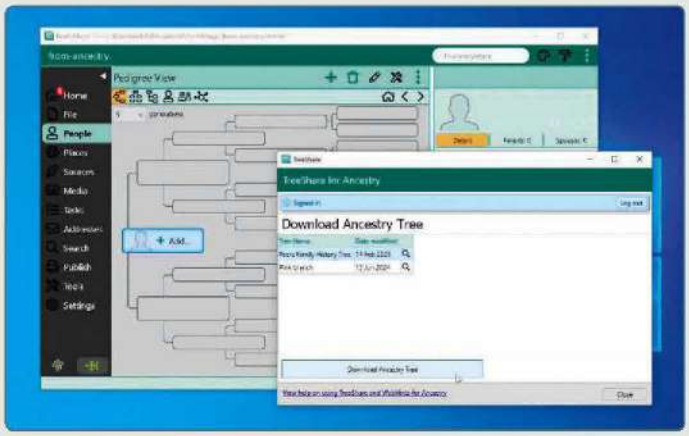
To upload any changes that you make in RootsMagic back to your Ancestry tree, select 'Publish' in the left-hand pane then choose 'Ancestry TreeShare'.



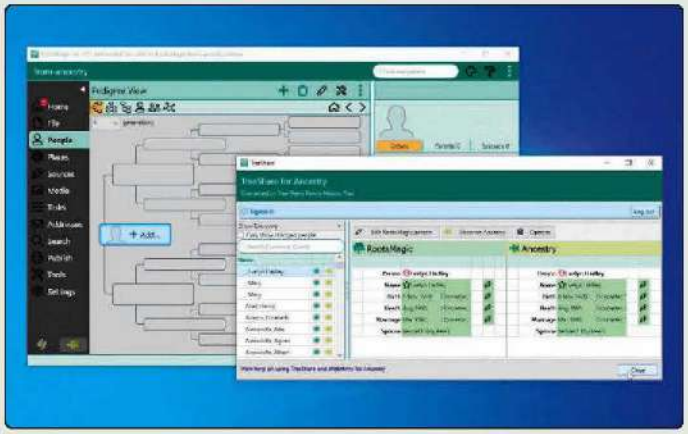
1 Download Your Tree After installing, launch RootsMagic and choose the 'Essentials' version if you're not already a fully paid-up user. You'll find yourself at the program's 'Home' screen, which resembles a dashboard. Start by clicking the 'Download a Tree' option from the 'RootsMagic Files' panel.



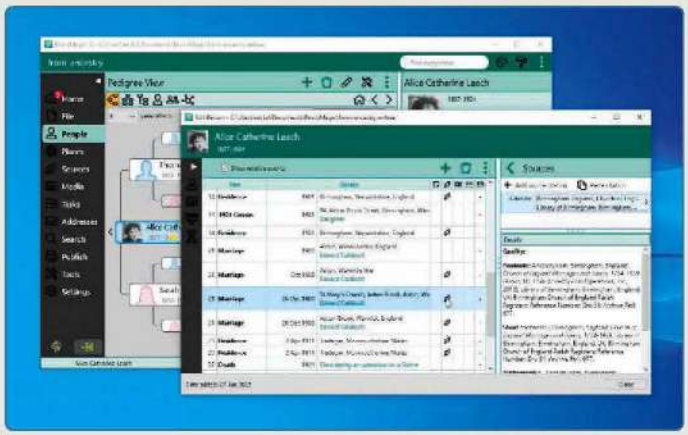
2 Create A New File Select the Ancestry option when prompted, then choose where you'd like to store your tree on your hard drive (click 'Browse for Destination' to pick a different folder to the default 'Documents', and to give your tree a suitably descriptive file name). Choose your file options and click 'OK'.



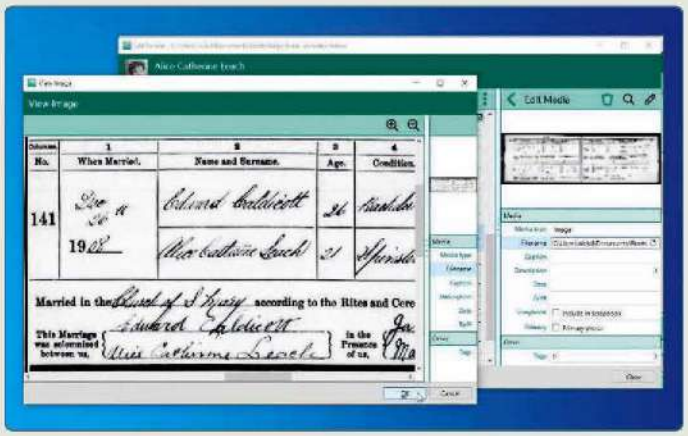
3 Link It To Ancestry A blank tree will be created and then RootsMagic will open a window in your web browser for you to sign into your Ancestry account. Fill in your details and click 'Sign in'. Once linked, close your browser, select your chosen online tree (if you have more than one) and click 'Download Ancestry Tree'.



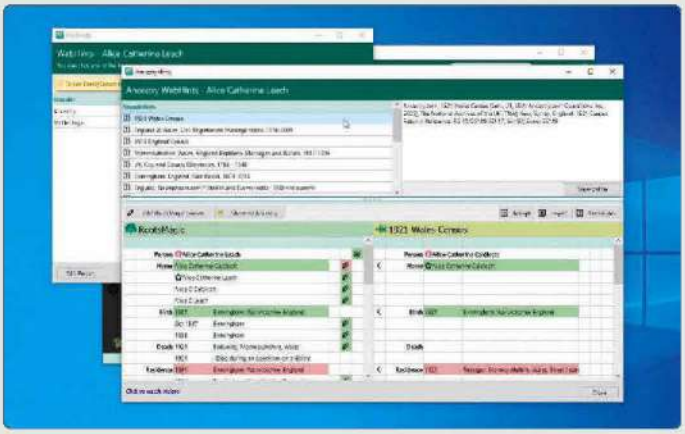
4 Import The Entire Tree Wait while RootsMagic downloads and imports your tree – including any photos and images attached to records like scans of documents. Once the process has finished, you'll see all of the files listed in the 'TreeShare for Ancestry' window. Click 'Close' to import the entire tree into RootsMagic.



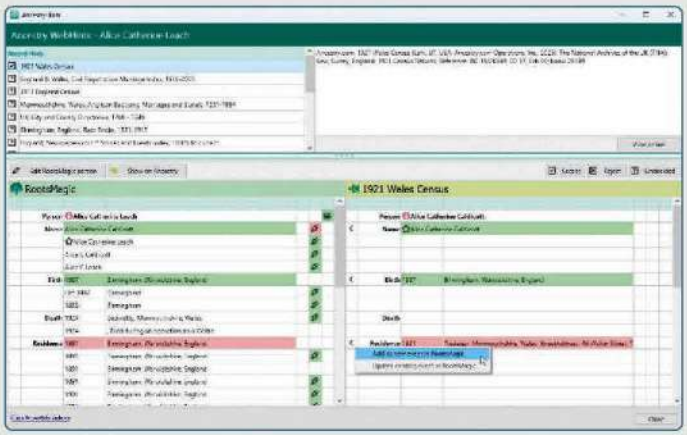
5 Browse Your Tree You'll see that your tree is now populated with everything that was on Ancestry. Double-click a person to open their personal page where their facts are listed. Look for a pen icon next to a record, indicating that it has a source. Double-click this to view the source in the right-hand pane.



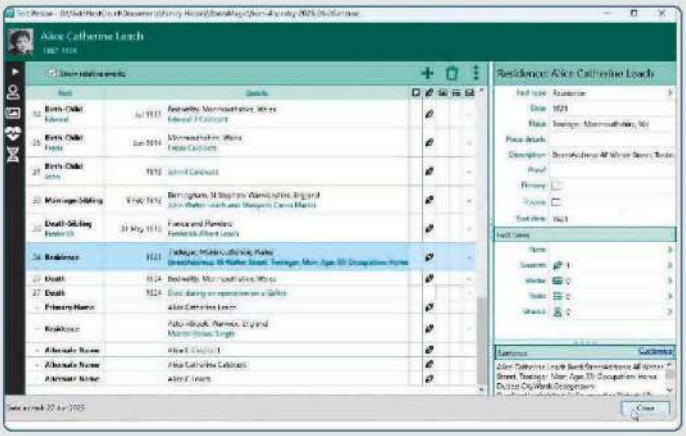
6 View The Original Image Click the citation name to read information about the source, and click-and-drag the horizontal divider with four green dots down to reveal more options. If the 'Media' field shows a picture icon, click it to reveal a thumbnail of the image. Double-click the thumbnail to view the original image up close.



7 View Ancestry Hints If a person has a yellow light bulb next to their name, there are potential record matches on Ancestry, MyHeritage (**myheritage.com**) or – if signed in – FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**). Click the Ancestry hints entry to view hints for that person including records, other trees and photos. Click one to review it.



8 Add Matching Records If you're a paid-up RootsMagic user then you can add these matches to your tree. To add a record, click < next to each piece of information you wish to incorporate as a fact in your tree. Choose to update an existing fact or add a new one, then click 'Accept Changes'.



9 View New Information Repeat for any other records; you can also selectively merge information from other member trees and attach photos to the current person too – all without a subscription. When finished, click 'Close'. You should find that each fact and its source citation have now been added to your tree.

SERVICE & SACRIFICE

As the third *Downton Abbey* film enters cinemas on 12 September and takes the Crawleys into the 1930s, **Felicity Day** explores life below stairs in the golden age of the British country house

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Most of us will never know what it's like to live in a country pile – the kind with a mile-long carriage drive, acres of parkland dotted with deer, and gilded rooms stuffed with Chippendale furniture and Canaletto paintings. Plenty of us will, however, have a forebear who once called such a house home, as they toiled as butler, housekeeper or cook, footman or maid in the service of the lord, lady or honourable squire who owned it.

These hard-working men and women, who woke to views of rolling hills and roamed palatial spaces day by day, were the aristocracy of domestic service in the 19th and early 20th centuries – a small minority of the more than 1.5 million Britons (most of them women) who earned their living as servants by 1901, in the golden age of the country house.

Their positions were highly coveted. The landed classes "seemed instinctively to know how to treat servants", as Gordon Grimmett – one of the servants at Longleat in Wiltshire – put it in *Gentlemen's Gentlemen* by Rosina Harrison (Arlington Books, 1976, and available to borrow from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-rosina-gent**). They were less stingy, more courteous, and interfered less in their staff's personal lives than the middle-class mistress who had fewer servants than she'd like.

The wages were competitive, given the often generous free food and free lodgings, which, if sometimes damp or spartan, were usually a great improvement on those that servants left behind. William Lanceley spent 43 years in so-called 'gentleman's service', and did not hesitate to describe country houses as "homes of comfort" in his memoir *From* ▶

▶ *Hall-Boy to House-Steward* (Edward Arnold & Co., 1925, and in the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-lanceley**).

There was often a clothing allowance too, and the potential for generous tips from the succession of 'upstairs' visitors – all of them benefits in kind that mattered. When William started out as a hall-boy in a Cheshire squire's house at 15, they enabled him to save the entirety of his £8 annual wage to send home to his widowed, debt-ridden mother.

A Sense Of Camaraderie

Toiling for the nobility or gentry also carried a social cachet, as some of their exalted status reflected onto their servants. And there was a sense of camaraderie and common purpose among their staff that was utterly unknown to the lonely and overloaded maids-of-all-work who made up the majority of the servant class. They were, wrote Eric Horne, former butler to the aristocracy, in his memoir *What the Butler Winked At* (T Werner Laurie, 1923, and on the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-but-winked**), "a little community" with an "Espirit de Corps" that he cherished.

Footmen serve wine at a hunt meet at Dunsany Castle, County Meath, in March 1923

In some houses, that community wasn't so little. At Holkham Hall in Norfolk, the Earls of Leicester had 25–30 indoor servants throughout the 19th century – about average – but there were 40 at Tatton Park, Cheshire, and 63 at Wentworth Woodhouse, Yorkshire. Meanwhile the magnificent Welbeck Abbey in Nottinghamshire, home of the Duke of Portland, felt to his footman Frederick Gorst "more like a principality" according to his memoir *Of Carriages and Kings* (written with Beth Andrews and published by Thomas Y Crowell in 1956, and available to borrow from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-gorst**). In 1900, 320 staff were spread across the house and wider estate, among them a dedicated wine butler and a vegetable maid. Even the falling incomes and rising taxes that followed the First World War had only a small impact on numbers at many such great estates.

A strict, rank-conscious hierarchy always operated among the servants, with the upper and the lower often dining separately. And as Horne caveated, there were "always spies about a place who tittle-tattle to the Master or Mistress". But living and working together in the confines of a house where the lodge gates were a mile off, let alone the nearest village, fostered supportive friendships.

And flirtations, too. Servants' halls were sociable spaces, with music, games and, often, weekly or monthly dances, creating opportunities for both decorous courtship and casual dalliance. At one servants' ball, at Eastnor Castle, Herefordshire, in the early 20th century, two of the staff managed to sneak unnoticed

Mary Anne Sharpe 1863–1930

How a junior maid became the lady of the house

Mary Anne was born into a family of straw plaiters in rural Bedfordshire. She went into service, and in 1881, aged 18, moved into Annesley Hall in Nottinghamshire as junior nursery-housemaid to John and Lina Chaworth-Musters.

There, an intimate relationship developed between Mary Anne and her employers' son, John Patricius (known as Patrick). The heir to the coal-rich estates had been educated at Eton and the University of Oxford. When Mary Anne was revealed to be carrying his child, there was uproar.

But hers was not the tragically familiar tale of a servant's sexual exploitation. She and Patrick were in love, and refused to give each other up. Keen to scotch the scandal, the Chaworth-Musters sent the couple off to live in their fishing lodge in Norway, presumably hoping that their son would come to his senses.

However, Mary Anne accompanied Patrick when he returned to Annesley Hall four years later on his father's death, as well as the couple's four children all of whom had been born in Norway. The couple married in 1888, legitimising their offspring, and Mary Anne became the new châtelaine of Annesley, presiding over the servants who she had once worked alongside.

Despite doubting her suitability for the role, it was to be a happy, successful union that lasted until Patrick passed away in 1921, marred only by the death of three of their 11 children while serving in the Army during the First World War.

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behind a curtain to indulge in private pleasures of the kind that resulted in the housemaid having to disclose a pregnancy.

The downstairs quarters of the great country houses were, in fact, as much a marriage market as the ballrooms upstairs, thanks to high staff turnover among the junior ranks and the constant influx of new faces downstairs whenever the family upstairs hosted visitors. In West Sussex, housemaid Jean Hibbert was one of countless young women who met her future husband, a gardener at Goodwood, in service, while the archives of Petworth House reveal it to have been a hotbed of romance. By 1860, there had been at least two marriages: lady's maid 'Tompy' wed Owen the valet, and Mr Smith, the bailiff, married Mrs Lingford, the housekeeper.

Reduced To Tears

Of course, the service itself was as gruelling as any other kind. Working days were still long, and started early: housemaids and footmen were generally up by 5am or 6am, many working 15–16 hours a day, alleviated only by a couple of hours' rest mid-afternoon. Duties were no less monotonous or physically demanding, either. At Cliveden, Buckinghamshire, scullery maids were reduced to tears by the endless, painful work of scouring pots and plates using abrasive soda. Even the most senior positions had their trials: one of the family at Goodwood got their butler, Marshall, to wear a pedometer and discovered that he walked 19½ miles in a single day.

Strict rules kept servants in their place, too. At some houses they were to disappear on encountering any of the family or guests, on pain of dismissal. And it was no meritocracy. "Did anyone see a cross-eyed servant? No, they are as scarce as dead donkeys," Horne wrote. Most aristocratic households wanted only good-looking, athletic footmen "not less than six feet, and taller if possible, to show off the family livery". Gorst not only had to powder his hair every day to replicate a wig – which, to his alarm, left him balding – but his employer insisted that he and his fellow footmen replace bread with rice, and stay trim with training in callisthenics and ju-jitsu.

Such sacrifices came with the territory. "No servant may have a will of their own," grumbled Horne. Often, they didn't even have their own name. In one house every footman was called William, in another Henry. Such practices made it difficult to escape the sense of being a chattel, as did "the badge[s] of servitude" – a cap and apron or livery suit.

Most aristocratic households wanted only good-looking, athletic footmen

A woman scrubs clothes clean in the 1930s. Many of our female relations spent untold hours in such drudgery while working below stairs

Many elite employers also frowned upon married servants, condemning some to singledom, and others, like William Lincoln, the butler at Audley End, Essex, to live a double life, declaring himself a bachelor while living 80 miles from his wife and two sons.

Yet 'gentleman's service' offered more consolations than most. There were chances to travel with the family, to escape a quiet village and see the glittering lights of London and beyond. There were also less stressful paths to promotion; it was not unusual for servants to be found positions in their employer's other homes, or in those of their extended family, when they were ready to step up, saving them the uncertainty of job-seeking. Indeed, it was very possible to ▶

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A maid vacuums a carpet in this picture from a catalogue that was published by the British Vacuum Cleaner Company Ltd in 1911

work, man and boy, for one family: Andrew Crozier arrived at Cragside, Northumberland, as a footman aged 10 in 1881, and retired as butler in 1943.

There were more perks, too: a Christmas gift of £5 at Welbeck Abbey, for instance, where there was also a billiard room for the menservants, and a maid assigned to clean the footmen's quarters. William Lanceley enjoyed fishing in his squire's lake, while other servants cherished access to their employer's libraries and gardens.

An Employer's Kindness

And for every employer prone to shouting and bullying, there were those who showed real kindness. A maid at Erddig Hall, Wrexham, in the 1910s recalled being nursed through scarlet fever by her mistress, who also covered the doctor's fees, while Hibbert remembered the Duke and Duchess of Richmond organising and paying for her wedding at Goodwood because her relations were so far away. Even familial-like relationships are not just TV confections. One lady's maid kept up a lifelong correspondence with her mistress after she left to marry, while Caroline Hodges, who lived with the Cecil family at Hatfield, Hertfordshire, for over 40 years as nurse to the children, was mourned at her death as a "loved and trusted friend" according to her tombstone.

There was also a tradition of landed employers looking after staff in their old age. Often, they were housed in estate cottages and given pensions, something unknown to most of our working-class ancestors. Others received bequests that enabled them to set up in business.

Even so, the obligation was surely still heaviest on one side. No country house could function, no wealthy family could live in comfort nor host their glittering parties without a small army of servants labouring behind the scenes. "When I visit some of the stately homes today," a former maid told Frank Dawes, author of *Not in Front of the Servants* (Wayland, 1973, and available to borrow from the Internet Archive at **tinyurl.com/arch-dawes-not**), "I often think how much the owners owe to we servants who took such a pride in our work." Perhaps we ought to do the same, whether our own forebears were among them or not.

FELICITY DAY is a historian. Her latest book *Historic Royal Palaces: Royal Blooms* (Welbeck, 2025) is a botanical history of the Crown

Resources

Take your research further

BOOKS

The Duties of Servants
Anonymous
Frederick Warne & Co., 1890
Guides like this one reveal the routines of those who worked below stairs. It's free from the Internet Archive: **tinyurl.com/arch-duties-serv**.

Tracing Your Servant Ancestors
Michelle Higgs
Pen & Sword, 2012
Higgs explains the sources to discover ancestors in service and details of their employment, from the census to union records.

Up and Down Stairs
Jeremy Musson
John Murray, 2009
Musson brings to life service in the country house from the Middle Ages to the 20th century.

What the Butler Winked At
Eric Horne
T Werner Laurie, 1923
Horne worked for the nobility and gentry between the 1860s and 1910s, and his memoir provides a fascinating insight. It's available from the Internet Archive too at **tinyurl.com/arch-but-wink**.

WEBSITES

CHATSWORTH HOUSE
w **tinyurl.com/chat-serv**
Country houses often keep their own archives which may hold records of employees going back centuries. Some resources are online, such as this database from Chatsworth House in Bakewell, Derbyshire, and one from Harewood House in Yorkshire at **servants.harewood.org**.

NATIONAL TRUST
w **tinyurl.com/nt-below-stairs**
At some National Trust properties, and many stately homes still in family ownership, you can walk in the footsteps of their servants and explore everything from sculleries to attic bedrooms. Here are recommended examples.

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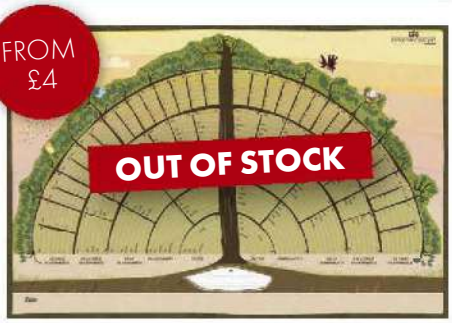

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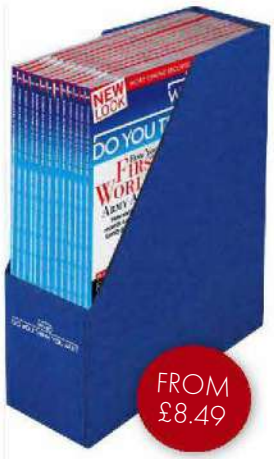

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'Father Escaped The Nazis By Stowing Away On A Trawler'

Most of Wim Zwalf's Jewish relations were murdered during the Second World War, but the Dutch Resistance helped his father flee the Netherlands for Britain. Interview by **Gail Dixon**

Family history has always been an interest of mine, mainly because of my rare surname Zwalf. Until I was in my late teens, I had never met anyone with the same name.

My father Joseph Zwalf was born in the Netherlands in 1918 to Levie Zwalf (known as Louis) and his wife Johanna Pampel. He had a large extended family across the country. Joseph met my mother Patricia Mary Charlton in Australia while serving in the Royal Netherlands Army, and they married there in 1943. After the Second World War ended, he enjoyed a long and distinguished career in the civil service, eventually becoming the Dutch ambassador to Uruguay, and was knighted in 1967.

REV. WIM ZWALF lives in Oakham, Rutland, and is a canon emeritus of Ely Cathedral, Cambridgeshire. He has been researching his tree for 30 years

My Brick Wall

Joseph's family was Jewish, and he kept his background hidden behind a thick wall of silence. It was too painful for him to talk about. The few snippets of information I gathered came from my lovely Dutch grandmother Johanna, who lived in Amsterdam after the war. Grandmother would mention our relatives, but often she would just say that they died during the war.

There were approximately 140,000 Jewish people living in the Netherlands before the German invasion in 1940, and the Nazis murdered 75 per cent of them. I wanted to know more about how my father and grandmother managed to survive, and what had happened to our extended Dutch family.

My Eureka Moment

Joseph died in 1982, but it was not until the 1990s and the advent of the Web that I could follow up the incredible story of escape that he once sketched out when I was only 11 years old.

I got in touch with the Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies (NIOD; **niod.nl/en**) in Amsterdam, and an archivist at the institute immediately gave me helpful suggestions to pursue.

Various studies had been published in Dutch by then, including a thesis that I could read online, and books with details of escapes including that of Joseph. These really helped to flesh out the tale my father had told me.

I also contacted one of Joseph's fellow escapees Piet Servaas, who had immigrated to the USA.

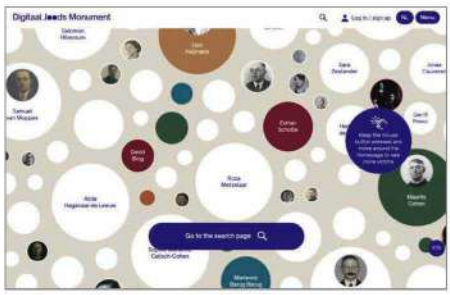
Researching Dutch Jewish Ancestry

These free websites can help you find out more about Dutch Jews in your family tree

Arolsen Archives

w **arolsen-archives.org/en/**

The International Center on Nazi Persecution in Bad Arolsen, Germany, keeps alive the memory of victims of the Nazis. Millions of documents are available in its online archive.



The Jewish Monument

w **www.joodsmonument.nl/en/**

This searchable database includes details of Dutch Jews who were killed by the Nazis. You can upload information about your own relations, and contact other researchers.

WieWasWie

w **wiewaswie.nl/en/**

This site is run by a Dutch research centre for genealogy and heraldry in The Hague, and includes population registers, passenger lists, family announcements and church books.

Piet explained more about the leading role that Father took in their brave venture.

Father's Escape

When Germany invaded the Netherlands Father was working as a trainee accountant in Rotterdam, 45 miles south of the family home in Velsen. His company had links to the Resistance, who helped Joseph and eight other Jews launch a dangerous escape mission involving hijacking a trawler.

In April 1942 they evaded German sentries to board the *Katwijk II* which was harboured in the port of Ijmuiden. They hid for a day and a night under boards in the hold, which was freezing cold and stank of fish.

Finally they set sail, after the stowaways endured terror when German soldiers briefly boarded the boat to search it.

The *Katwijk II* was allowed to fish between 55 km and 65 km from shore (34–40 miles), but had to leave by 5pm and return by 9am. Joseph and his fellow refugees were desperately seasick and stiff after hiding, but had no option but to try to force the captain to sail to Britain.

When the trawler anchored, Joseph led the group out of their stinking dungeon. Thankfully, as fellow countrymen, the Dutch sailors were happy to take them to safety, although it meant that they couldn't return home where they would have faced interrogation.

This photo from 1932 shows Wim's father Joseph with his parents Johanna and Louis Zwalf

The boat docked in Great Yarmouth on the Norfolk coast. Female escapee Elly Nauta, whose father ran the accountancy firm, danced for joy on the quayside.

Word was sent back to Ijmuiden regarding their safety using a coded message broadcast on the BBC European Service that included the phrase, "The house with the double shutters."

The deportation of Dutch Jews to concentration camps began a few months later in July 1942. The Dutch crew fished the waters around Fleetwood, Lancashire, for the rest of the war, and after being vetted by MI5, Joseph joined the armed forces and served in the Dutch East Indies and Australia. He was awarded the Bronze Cross of the Kingdom of the Netherlands for bravery.

Other Discoveries

Through contacting the NIOD, I learnt that my grandfather Louis had been arrested while walking down the street in Amsterdam. He was then taken to Auschwitz, and murdered in 1943. His brother Hartog had also perished at the Nazis' hands.

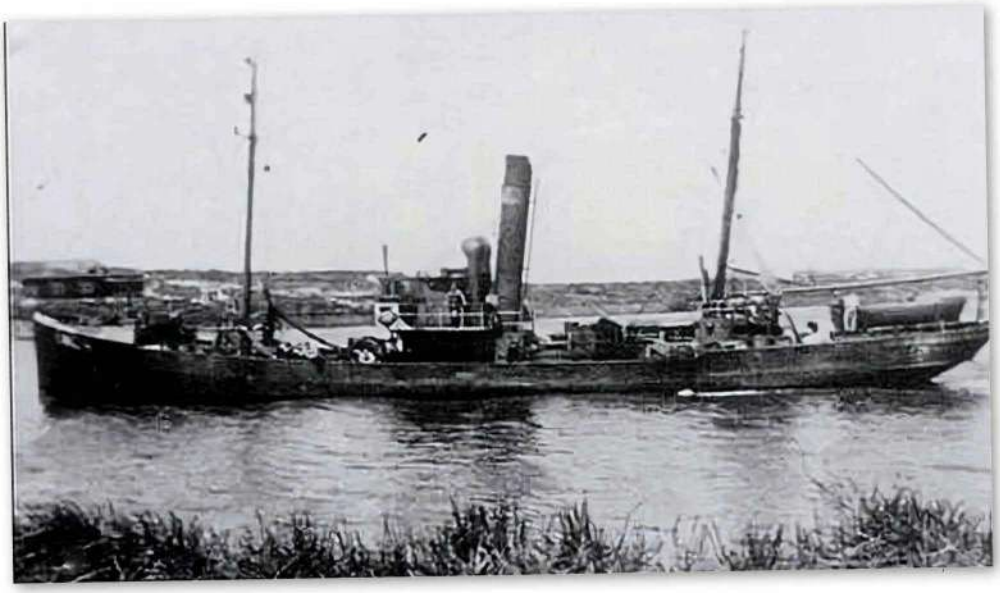
In fact, almost 80 members of my extended Zwalf family were killed in Auschwitz or Sobibor in Poland, and only two of Joseph's 18 cousins survived the war.

I've written a book about my research called *The House With the Double Shutters* (Penny For Your Sports Publications, 2024, RRP £9.99). It also explains how Johanna survived the war living in hiding with brave Dutch families. The book is dedicated to my children in the hope that the stories of their grandparents and great grandparents will live on.

HAVE YOU BROKEN THROUGH A BRICK WALL?

Share your family story with us and you could appear in the magazine!

Please write to us at the address on page 6 or email *wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk*



Joseph escaped on the trawler *Katwijk II*

Reader Tips

Wim has this advice for family historians with Dutch roots

- Don't be put off if records are in Dutch. Many archivists will be happy to translate documents into English for you.
- Dutch population registers can provide a much more detailed history of your family than census returns can.
- The Netherlands has been very active in putting records from the Second World War online.

If you'd like to buy Wim's book direct from the author with free UK P&P, email *wimzwalf@aol.com*.

AROUND BRITAIN

Tyne and Wear

Jonathan Scott shares exciting news of heritage projects in north-east England

This photograph from 2016 shows the Gateshead Millennium Bridge over the Tyne, which links the town with Newcastle

Ballast Hills is a largely forgotten, unconsecrated burial site in the heart of Newcastle. Also known locally as Grannies Fields or Plaguey Fields, it became the final resting place for generations of nonconformists, the working poor, cholera victims and visitors to the port city. Today archaeologists and historians, with volunteer support, are seeking to tell the story of this overlooked part of Newcastle, and are appealing for anyone with family connections to those buried there to come forward.

Dr Myra Giesen from Newcastle University is leading the Ballast Hills Burial Ground Project, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. She explains, "Ballast Hills opened in the mid-1600s and closed in 1853, and is one of the most significant, but little-known, burial sites of its type in the region, with over 40,000 people interred there. It holds important stories about Newcastle's industrial, social and religious history, which are just waiting to be explored."

Many individuals have reconnected with family stories via our website

The project is uncovering and sharing these histories through archival research, on-site documentation, and public engagement. "One of the most exciting developments has been the emergence of a growing descendants group. Many individuals have reconnected with family stories via our website Ballast Hills Burial Ground (**blogs.ncl.ac.uk/ballast-hills**)."

As we went to press the team were running volunteer-led gravestone-recording sessions, as well as volunteer research workshops with the team at Newcastle's City Library at 33 New Bridge Street West (**new.newcastle.gov.uk/libraries/find-library/city-library**), with the aim of creating biographies of those buried there, to "curate all the hidden stories from this forgotten location".

Readers can also see a recent post about the project on the

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Free Online Records

Directories, nonconformist and probate records, parish registers and a miners' index

Nonconformist Records

w **tinyurl.com/fs-northum-nc**

This FamilySearch collection from Northumberland covers 1613–1974 and groups such as Presbyterian, Catholic, Baptist, Wesleyan, Quaker, Methodist and Unitarian. To view images you must visit a Family History Center or affiliate library.

Probate Records

w **tinyurl.com/dur-uni-prob**

Via Durham University's North East Inheritance Database you can view pre-1858 wills proved in County Durham linked to FamilySearch images. The site also has Bishops' Transcripts.

Parish Registers

w **freereg.org.uk**

At time of editing FreeREG included 1,491,989 Northumberland records, as well as 684,799 records for Durham.

Miners' Index

w **tinyurl.com/thestory-min**

This index boasts 229,648 names from trade-union records and other coal-mining collections held at The Story Durham.

Trade Directories

w **tinyurl.com/sco-dir**

Directories for Northumberland and County Durham are on the University of Leicester's site Special Collections Online.

university's blog (**from.ncl.ac.uk/hidden-histories-the-story-of-ballast-hills-burial-ground**).

Diverse Repositories

This is just one of several heritage projects happening in Tyne and Wear. The area is formed from five distinct boroughs that were once part of the historic counties of Northumberland and County Durham, and include Newcastle, Sunderland, Gateshead and South Shields. As a result, there are numerous archives and local-history libraries at your disposal, all of which may hold vital material relating to your forebears. Depending on the type of record you're after, and the period you're researching, you may find records are held in the county collections for Northumberland (**northumberlandarchives.com**) or County Durham (**thestorydurham.org**), or at Tyne & Wear Archives (**twarchives.org.uk**), housed in the Discovery Museum in Newcastle (**northeastmuseums.org.uk**).

Original parish registers from the diocese of Newcastle, covering Northumberland and Newcastle, survive at Northumberland Archives. Registers from the diocese of Durham cover the area between the rivers Tyne and Tees, meaning that those from Gateshead, South Shields, Sunderland, Hartlepool, Stockton and Billingham are all preserved at the county archive at The Story Durham. Meanwhile the University of Durham's Palace Green Library (**durham.ac.uk/things-to-do/venues/historic-libraries-at-palace-green/**) holds parish-chest records, Bishops' Transcripts and pre-1858 probate material.

You can find browsable images of registers held by Northumberland Archives on FamilySearch, as well as Durham diocese Bishops' Transcripts (**familysearch.org/search/collection/1309819**). There's also the specialist pay-per-view website Durham Records Online (**durhamrecordsonline.com**), which has lots of databases of parish records, census material and nonconformist records. Finally, don't forget that Tyne & Wear Archives holds microfilm copies of all parishes within the coverage area, and you can download a guide in PDF format from **twarchives.org.uk/collection/user-guides-and-information.**

Fishing boats leave their harbour in South Shields in this magic-lantern slide dating from c1880

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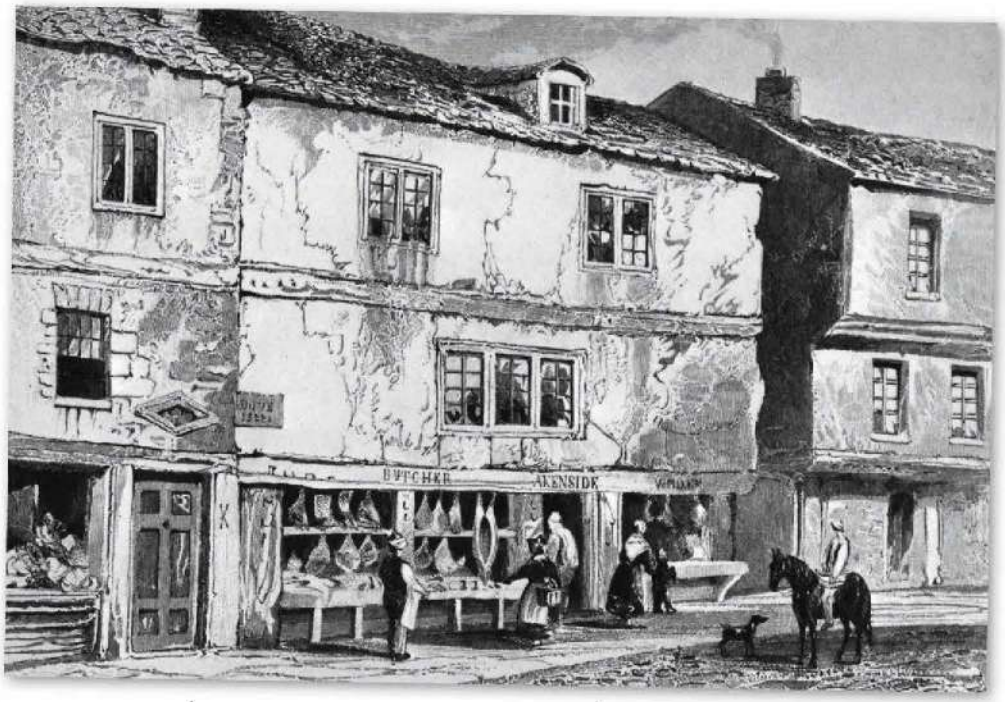
The region's industrial heritage was shaped by the rivers Tyne and Wear, which provided crucial access to trade and resources. The shipbuilding collections at Tyne & Wear Archives include substantial records of administration, ship plans and photographs from most of the major shipyards. The Swan Hunter archive alone comprises more than 11,000 records.

Nonconformist Additions

Acquisitions since our last visit in November 2021 include an array of nonconformist material, from an 1895 membership roll for the Church of the Divine Unity in Newcastle, to records of various methodist churches in Sunderland and Newcastle, to presbyterian congregations from South Shields, including birth/baptism registers and communicants' rolls. Another new volume for South Shields researchers is a 1920s teachers' salaries book, arranged by school.

A digital newcomer is the interactive historical map launched as part of the project Unlocking North East Jewish Heritage. Via **unejh.humap.site** you can explore 25,000 digitised images, tagged to contemporary and historic maps.



A butcher's shop in Newcastle, c1760

Lizzy Baker, archives lead at Tyne & Wear Archives, explains, "Users can explore by theme or geographical area, or more specific terms like a name or congregation. Images depict a wide range of material, from photos and certificates to old newspaper adverts from Jewish businesses like the Newcastle-based travel agent Callers-Pegasus and Sunderland's kosher butchers P Cohen and C Cohen; the Jewish community of Sunderland is considered to be the oldest in north-east England, with the first members settling here during the 1750s."

Images include minute books, orders of service, building plans, personal papers and certificates. Among them is a certificate recording the 1877 marriage between David Cohen and Lena Peterowsky, which is thought to have been the last marriage to take place at Temple Street Synagogue – the first purpose-built synagogue in Newcastle.

Project coordinator Julie Ballands says, "It's been a fascinating project to be part of. It's allowed us to unearth fresh insights, offering users the chance to delve into untold stories of Jewish people in a new, accessible and self-led way."

Digitised Newspapers

Meanwhile Gateshead Archive (**gateshead.gov.uk/article/9671/Gateshead-Archive**), located at Gateshead Central Library, has recently completed digitising the only known complete run of the weekly *Gateshead Post* (1946–2003). This contains a range of information useful for genealogy including birth, death and wedding announcements, as well as wedding and school photographs, and adverts for local shops and businesses.

Libraries and heritage manager Jen Bell says, "If your family was involved in mining then Gateshead Archive's oral history collection may also be of interest. Work to catalogue audio recordings made in the 1970s with participants in the 1925 miners' lockouts and 1926 General Strike has recently been completed, and the interviews can be heard at the archive."

Finally, handwritten burgess rolls from the 1800s, which are not available on Ancestry (**ancestry.co.uk**) or Findmypast (**findmypast.co.uk**), have also been transcribed and are available to search at the archive.

TOP TIP!
You can find a useful guide to the where and when of parish registers across the region at **durhamrecordoffice.org.uk/family-history/parish-registers/**.

LOCAL INDUSTRY

Coal Mining Did any of your Tyne and Wear relations dig for coal?

Miners at Heworth Colliery compare their wage slips, 1950

Among the many collections preserved by Tyne & Wear Archives (**twarchives.org.uk**) are records of the Northumberland and Durham Miners' Permanent Relief Fund Friendly Society, established in 1862. Both Northumberland Archives (**northumberlandarchives.com**) and The Story Durham (**thestorydurham.org**) have mining material as well, and the Durham's Hidden Depths database at **tinyurl.com/the-story-depths** presents information extracted from the Durham Miners' Association. There are also online resource guides created by the Mining Institute in Newcastle (**mininginstitute.org.uk/resource-guides/**).

GETTY IMAGES

DIRECTORY

ARCHIVES & LIBRARIES

Tyne & Wear Archives

a **Discovery Museum, Blandford Square, Newcastle NE1 4JA**
t 0191 277 2248
e *archives@northeastmuseums.org.uk*
w **twarchives.org.uk**

Tyne & Wear Archives preserves material from locations including Gateshead, South Tyneside, Newcastle and Sunderland. Business records cover shipbuilding, engineering and coal mining, and there are parish registers on microfilm. The website includes guides to collections, themed galleries and an online catalogue that can be searched at **calmview.twmuseums.org.uk/calmview/**.

Discover North Tyneside

a **North Shields Customer First Centre, Northumberland Square, North Shields NE30 1QU**
t 0191 643 5270
e *discover@northtyneside.gov.uk*
w **https://my.northtyneside.gov.uk/category/1017/local-studies-and-information**

The website has guides to the parish records available, cemeteries and crematoria, electoral registers and trade directories. There's an indexed collection of more than 50,000 photos, and the *Shields Daily News* is indexed back to its launch in the mid-1800s.

Durham University Archives And Special Collections

a **Barker Research Library, Palace Green Library, Palace Green, Durham DH1 3RN**
t 0191 334 2276
w **durham.ac.uk/departments/library/archives-and-special-collections/**

Highlights here include Bishops' Transcripts from the diocese of Durham, and wills that were proved by Church of England courts. These are available digitally from FamilySearch (**familysearch.org**) and the North East Inheritance Project (**familyrecords.awh.durham.ac.uk/nei/**) respectively.

Gateshead Local Archive

a **Gateshead Central Library, Prince Consort Road, Gateshead NE8 4LN**
t 0191 433 8430
e *libraries@gateshead.gov.uk*
w **gateshead.gov.uk/article/9671/Gateshead-Archive**

The local-history collection contains more than 40,000 items including maps, photos, books and manuscripts. You can find details of material such as burgess rolls, electoral registers, church records and burial records at **gateshead.gov.uk/article/9672/Family-history**.

Newcastle Local Studies

a **Newcastle City Library, 33 New Bridge Street West, Newcastle NE1 8AX**
t 0191 278 7878
e *heritage@newcastle.gov.uk*
w **new.newcastle.gov.uk/libraries/explore-library-services-and-activities/history-and-heritage**

The local-studies collections are on Level 6 of the library.

Northumberland Archives

a **Woodhorn, QEII Country Park, Ashington, Northumberland NE63 9YF**
t 01670 624358
e *archives@northumberland.gov.uk*
w **northumberlandarchives.com**

Northumberland Archives is based in Woodhorn, a former coal mine that closed down in 1981.

Sunderland Local Studies Library

a **Creative Smart City Hub, Washington Library, Independence Square, Washington NE38 7RZ**
t 0191 561 8439
e *local.historylibrary@sunderland.gov.uk*
w **sunderland.gov.uk/article/26572/Local-History-Library**

Since our last visit Sunderland's local-history collection has moved to Washington Library. Digitised material can be seen at **archive.culturehousesunderland.co.uk**.

The Story (Durham)

a **Mount Oswald, Durham DH1 3TQ**
t 03000 267619
e *collections@thestorydurham.org*
w **thestorydurham.org**

Durham County Record Office reopened as The Story Durham in June 2024. Alongside parish material for the historic county, it looks after collections relating to railways, engineering and coal mining, and unions and associations. You can search them via **thestorydurham.org/our-collections/online-collection/**.

The Word

a **45 Market Place, South Shields NE33 1JF**
t 0191 427 1818
e *enquiries@theworduk.org*
w **theworduk.org/explore/archives/**

South Tyneside Council's cultural venue has a Local and Family History section with parish registers, electoral rolls and directories. Photos can be viewed at **southtynesidehistory.co.uk**.

MUSEUMS

North East Museums

w **northeastmuseums.org.uk**

You can find details of local museums here. The Discovery Museum (**discoverymuseum.org.uk**) in Newcastle, for example, holds material shedding light on maritime, social and regimental history. There's also the Great North Museum: Hancock (**greatnorthmuseum.org.uk**), which is in Newcastle too, and the South Shields Museum & Art Gallery (**southshieldsmuseum.org.uk**).

SOCIETY

Northumberland & Durham Family History Society

a **3rd Floor, New England House, 10 Ridley Place, Newcastle NE1 8JW**
t 0191 261 2159
w **ndfhs.org.uk**

The society has a research centre and library in Newcastle. Members can access online records including indexes to baptisms, marriages and burials, and names mentioned in Northumberland and Durham probate records (1701–1858) or memorial inscriptions.

WEBSITE

Durham Records Online

w **durhamrecordsonline.com**

This commercial site has more than 10.7 million names across census and parish material. Recent additions include catholic baptisms from St Joseph in Gateshead (1851–1854) and Gateshead Wesleyan Methodist Circuit baptisms (1812–1837).

VAD nurses' magazine, 1919

Ewan O'Neill of the British Psychoanalytical Society shares a magazine celebrating VADs' service Interview By Rosemary Collins

The British Red Cross and the Order of St John formed the Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) in 1909 to provide volunteer humanitarian aid to military forces, particularly hospitals. When the First World War broke out five years later the VAD played a crucial role in helping sick and injured military personnel.

At their peak there were more than 90,000 VAD volunteers at home and abroad. The archive of the British Psychoanalytical Society holds a magazine that was produced by a group of VAD nurses at the Red Cross Hospital in Torquay, Devon – including one of the most famous volunteers, the future bestselling crime novelist Agatha Christie. Archivist Ewan O'Neill tells us more.

The magazine shines a light on the experiences of wartime VAD nurses

What Is The Magazine?

This handmade magazine is named *What We Did in the Great War*. It was created by a small number of staff at the Red Cross Hospital in Torquay Town Hall to commemorate the time that they spent there together during the First World War.

The magazine includes a fictional play with notated musical accompaniment, watercolour illustrations, joke advertisements, humorous letters and poems, an agony column, tongue-in-cheek health-and-beauty tips, and other amusing articles. The tone of the magazine is educated, witty and has a keen sense of the absurd, but also reflects the camaraderie and optimism among the staff at the hospital.

It was presented to Sylvia Payne, who was commandant and medical officer in charge of the hospital, for which she was made a Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) in 1918. She had qualified from the London School of Medicine for Women (now the University College London Medical School) in 1906, and during the war became interested in psychoanalysis. Sylvia began her training in psychoanalysis and, after becoming a member of the British Psychoanalytical Society in 1924, played an increasingly important role in the practice, advocacy and administration of psychoanalysis, going on to serve as the president of the society twice, in 1944–1947 and 1954–1956.

Why Did You Choose It?

The magazine is penned in part by a young Agatha Christie. During the war she swapped her sheltered and genteel life of tea parties and dress fittings for a drab uniform and often distressing duties at the hospital as a VAD nurse, caring for military personnel returning from the battlefields.

What We Did in the Great War provides a fascinating insight into Agatha's genius, revealing that she was already plotting her first novel, inspired by the potential of drugs to harm as well as heal. The magazine even features jokes about patients falling victim to dispensing errors; one report, headlined "Coroners Inquest at Torquay", informs readers that, "The deceased was supposed to be progressing favourably when he died suddenly, immediately after swallowing a dose of medicine." Although none of the contributors puts her initials to this article, the connection to a certain literary motif is unmistakable – poisons remained a powerful narrative device throughout Agatha's career.

Unfortunately, we don't know who the other contributors are because they're merely referred to by initials. We only know that "A.C." was Agatha Christie because of the connection with Sylvia's son Kenneth, who donated the magazine to us and knew its provenance.

What Does It Tell Us About The War?

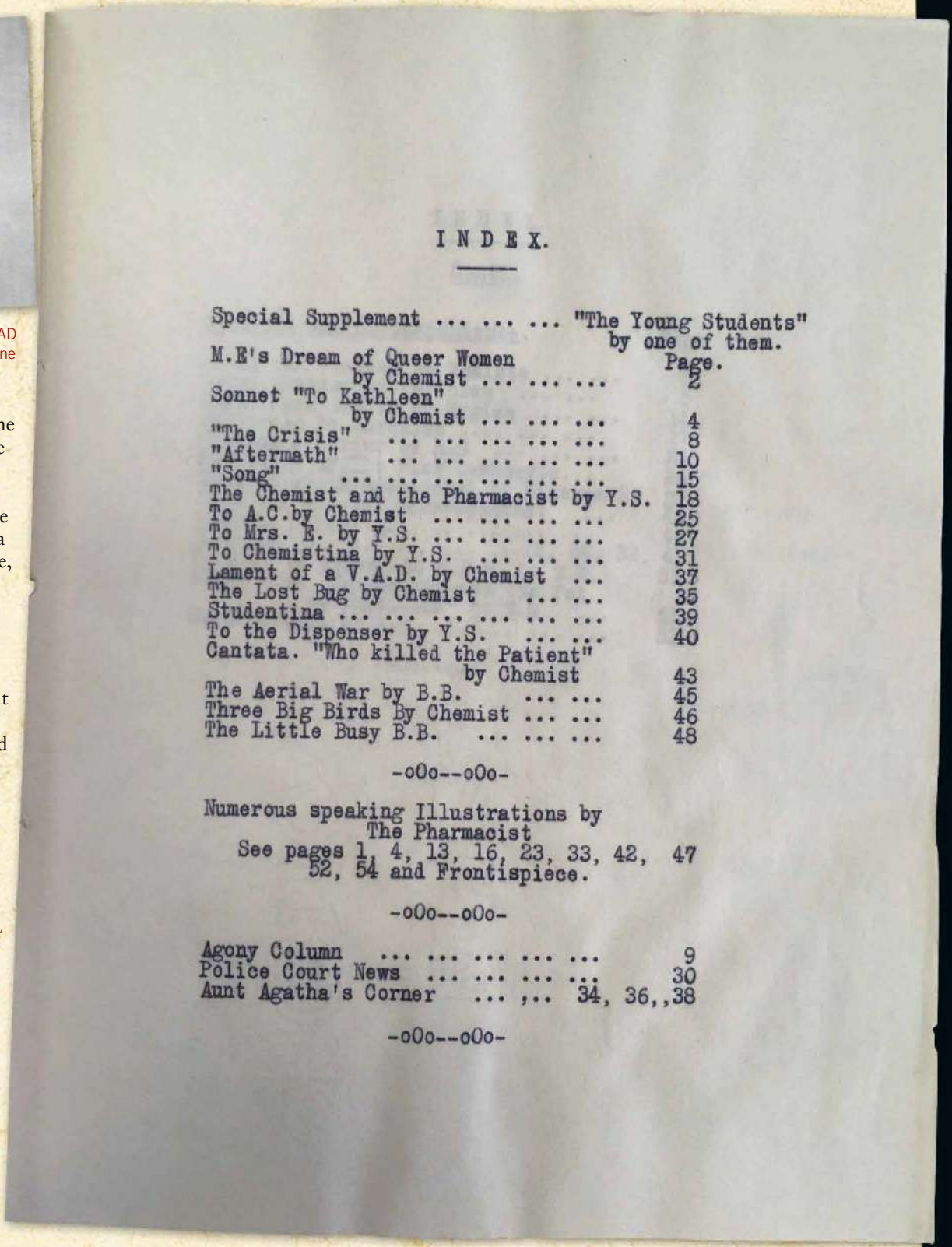
The magazine shines a light on the experiences of the wartime VAD nurses, who lacked the skills and discipline of professional nurses but nevertheless played a crucial role in supporting the work of the war hospitals. Their duties were menial, and often distressing. They assisted the trained and qualified nurses, and offered what solace they could to the men, damaged in mind and body, who were brought from the trenches to be treated in hospitals such as the one at Torquay Town Hall.

Visit Us

British Psychoanalytical Society Archive
a Institute of Psychoanalysis, 112a Shirland Road, Maida Vale, London W9 2BT
t 020 7563 5010
e *archives@iopa.org.uk*
w **bpasarchives.accesstomemory.org/**

The archive's reading room is open Thursdays and Fridays, 9.30am–12.30pm and 1.30pm–4.30pm, although all visits to the reading room must be booked in advance.

Agatha Christie was one of the VAD nurses who wrote for the magazine



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-oOo--oOo-

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-oOo--oOo-

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-oOo--oOo-

The magazine doesn't dwell on the horrors of the appalling injuries that the VADs witnessed and the shattered lives that they cared for every day on the wards, but instead gives a vivid idea of the resilience, good humour, common sense and camaraderie needed to work in such circumstances.

However, it is disappointing to note that despite the VAD nurses' essential contribution and front-line experience, the General Nursing Council decided that they should be barred from joining the official register of nurses launched in 1922.

What Other Material Do You Hold?

Our archive contains the personal papers of many eminent psychoanalysts, including Ernest Jones, James and Alix Strachey, and Joan Riviere. They chart the rich history of the society, the development of psychoanalysis and its role in medicine, mental health and society both in Great Britain and overseas.

Our most popular collection is that of Marion Milner, who became a prominent member of the society. Her best-known book *A Life of One's Own*, first published in 1934 under the pseudonym Joanna Field, outlines her introspective journey in an attempt to discover the nature of happiness. Her introspection extended into other areas, from an analysis of everyday worries to other experiences that some reviewers described as "mystical".

Marion began working as a psychoanalyst in 1943, and her influential account *The Hands of the Living God* (1969) relates her 20-year treatment of a patient and the insights she gained.

Also, Marion used painting and doodling in her therapy, and was an accomplished artist. One of her paintings is on display at the Towner Gallery in Eastbourne as part of the exhibition 'Sussex Modernism', which ends on 28 September 2025 (**towner eastbourne.org.uk/whats-on/sussex-modernism**).

REVIEWS

The latest books on history and genealogy, plus apps, podcasts and websites

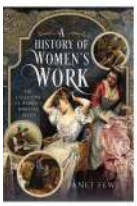
A History Of Women's Work

SOCIAL HISTORY

The Evolution Of Women's Working Lives

Janet Few
Pen & Sword, 176 pages, £22

The book's pictures reflect the breadth of our female ancestors' occupations, including *(clockwise from left)* women salvaging old rags, Royal Navy nurses at Chatham Dockyard, a lady's maid ironing lace, and workers in a First World War munitions factory



An examination of women's work in 23 chapters is a creation to be reckoned with. Here historian Janet Few, a regular contributor to *Who Do You Think You Are? Magazine*, manages to sketch outlines of various types of employment for women. From sewing, domestic service, glove making, straw plaiting and factory work to the oldest profession in the world – prostitution, she gives a good overview of all types of women's work. As she says herself, this book acts as an introduction to women's work, but she helpfully points out suggestions for more in-depth studies, including websites, in a reference section at the back. In some of the chapters, she even manages to examine the life of a real woman as an example of a trade in order to give a more detailed idea of what her daily tasks looked like.

Few divides the types of women's work into three categories – household tasks, home industries and paid employment outside the home. In sewing clothes, plait making and feeding the family, she touches on earlier times back to the 1600s.

Few covers the time periods at which each industry peaked, and when it was at its most important. Domestic service was at its height in the Victorian period. Professional nursing developed around the same time, with Florence Nightingale nursing during the Crimean War (1853–1856). When exploring munitions workers, she concentrates on work during the First World War.

Few cites the health problems of particular trades – callouses for plaiters, 'fossy jaw' from phosphorus poisoning for matchstick makers, and venereal disease for prostitutes. Needless to say, women were also paid less than men in all areas of work.

This is an ideal introduction for those researching the work life of female ancestors.

Julie Peakman is a historian who writes about 18th-century culture and sexuality

PUBLIC DOMAIN | WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

DIGITAL PICKS

Rosemary Collins highlights three digital resources that caught our eye this month

RADIO

Podcasting Difficult Histories

tinyurl.com/bbc-free-diff

Free

As this column shows, podcasts are now one of the most popular formats to tell stories about history and family history. But what is the process of making such a podcast actually like? In this episode of Radio 4's *Free Thinking*, Matthew Sweet and three podcasters, Joe Dunthorne, Kavita Puri and Jenny Kleeman, discuss using podcasting to explore complicated subjects.

PODCAST

Your Most Obedient & Humble Servant

r2studios.org/show/your-most-obedient-humble-servant/

Free

Each episode of this podcast sees historian Kathryn Gehred and a guest discuss a letter sent by a woman in the 18th or early 19th century, revealing what it tells us about her life and the time in which she lived. The podcast generally has a US focus, although some of the women featured are British.

VIDEO

Echoes Of The Past

lumotv.co.uk/watch/echoes-the-past

Free

This half-hour documentary follows Sandra Bent, who is deaf, as she tries to find out how far back deaf heritage goes in her tree. The video is mostly in sign language, but you can click the 'CC' button on the bottom right of the screen to activate subtitles.

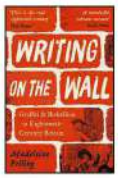
PUBLIC DOMAIN

SOCIAL HISTORY

Writing On The Wall

Graffiti And Rebellion In Eighteenth-Century Britain

Madeleine Pelling
Profile, 352 pages, £10.99



This exceptionally well-researched book from cultural historian Madeleine Pelling focuses on the history of the 18th century including true stories of crime, religious intolerance and revolution. Cleverly woven into the narrative are examples of graffiti dating from the period, hence the significance of the title, demonstrating in a tangible form the angst and despair felt among the population. By including case studies of people from all walks of life, Pelling illuminates the trials faced by residents of urban areas who quite literally left their mark in history.

Particularly eye-opening is the story of Mary Aubrey who killed her abusive husband in a time when divorce was not an option. The tragic suicide of potter James Doe, leading a parish constable to act as a detective to discover his motive, also highlights the hardships faced by an average 18th-century ancestor. A majority of the book is focused on London, although the political turmoil and social unrest was felt all over the country.

This book will be of interest to anyone wishing to learn more about the context of their forebears' lives in the 1700s, revealed through the verses, slogans, names and illustrations of those left behind.

Chloe O'Shea is a genealogist and author (thepastrevealed.co.uk). Her latest book *Tracing Your Staffordshire Ancestors* was published by Pen & Sword in May (RRP £15.99)

Reader Review YOUR CHANCE TO ASSESS THE LATEST BOOKS

Controlling Women The Untold Story Of Britain's First Female Police Force

Sandra Hempel
C Hurst & Co., 264 pages, £22

LAW & ORDER

This book offers a meticulously researched account of a little-known chapter in British history – the emergence of women in policing during the early 20th century. Drawing on a backdrop of an era shaped by shifting social norms and political intractability, Sandra Hempel unearths the struggles and triumphs of pioneering women who defied societal expectations to carve out a space in a male-dominated field.

The narrative addresses themes that echo today: the behavioural expectations of women; their clothing and morality during cross-examination in court; trial by popular media outlets; sexual exploitation of children; human trafficking; and uneasy power dynamics within law enforcement. Hempel also touches on how moral panic and institutional resistance shaped early efforts to include women in policing – not as equals, but tools of social control.

Women today have the vote, earn degrees and graduate, serve in law enforcement, and practise law; but Hempel's work is a sobering reminder that while progress has been made, equality is a journey still unfolding.

Edith Watson *(left)* and Nina Boyle of the Women Police Volunteers – Boyle co-founded the organisation in 1914

Louise Vernon, Sutton-In-Ashfield
Louise has been researching her family history for 26 years

Join Us... Send us an email if you'd like to join our reviewing panel
e ***wdytyaeditorial@ourmedia.co.uk***

TV & RADIO

Rosemary Collins previews upcoming programmes on history and family history

King & Conqueror

BBC One and BBC iPlayer
Late August

Nikolaj Coster-Waldau is best known for playing Jaime Lannister in *Game of Thrones* (2011–2019), but his new series features just as much violence and political intrigue – but taken from real life.

In *King & Conqueror*, Coster-Waldau plays William, Duke of Normandy – or, as he would become known, William the Conqueror, one of the most consequential figures in British history.

The eight-part drama takes us back to the 11th century, when life was cheap and no one could be trusted. In Normandy, William is an illegitimate son who has inherited his father's title and made a name for himself as a military commander. In England, the crowning of Edward the Confessor (Eddie Marsan) is meant to bring peace to the warring kingdoms of Wessex, Mercia and Northumbria. But Edward is weak, and controlled by his formidable mother Emma (Juliet Stevenson). As Edward's cousin, William risks being drawn into English politics whether he wishes to be or not.

Emily Beecham plays Edith Swan-neck in BBC One's new historical drama *King & Conqueror*

Elsewhere, Godwin, Earl of Wessex (Geoff Bell), seeks to secure his family's power by marrying his young daughter Gunhild (Bo Bragason) to Edward. Godwin's son Harold (James Norton) fears that Mercia means to break the peace, and resents being behind his volatile older brother Sweyn (Elliot Cowan) in the line of succession.

The epic series plays like a modern-language version of one of Shakespeare's history plays. It goes from the heights of the halls of power to the comedy and intimacy of everyday life, particularly in William and Harold's relationships with their wives Matilda of Flanders (played by Clémence Poésy) and Edith Swan-neck (Emily Beecham), while asking what it means to be a king – and what it takes to hold on to a throne. It shows the parallels between the two men as they go from reluctant allies to rivals for the English crown, until their fatal clash at the Battle of Hastings in 1066.

Jacob Elordi, Reagan Mannix and Show Kasamatsu star in *The Narrow Road*

The Great Plague With Rob Rinder & Ruth Goodman

My5
Streaming now

In this new Channel 5 series, presenters Ruth Goodman *(Victorian Farm)* and Rob Rinder *(Rob and Rylan's Grand Tour)* explore what life was like for rich and poor during history's most turbulent times. In the first episode, the duo travel back to London during the devastating Great Plague of 1665–1666. Rob investigates the lives of the capital's rich, including a cloth merchant and a vicar, while Ruth uncovers the story of a poor gravedigger. Two more episodes in which the pair investigate *The Great Fire of London* and *The Blitz* are also available.

The Narrow Road To The Deep North

BBC iPlayer
Streaming now

This series brings to life one of the worst tragedies of the Second World War – the horrifying abuse of captured Allied soldiers held in Japanese prison camps in the Far East. The drama is based on the 2013 novel by Richard Flanagan, which won the Man Booker Prize and was inspired by his father's experiences. The five episodes follow Dorrigo Evans (played by Jacob Elordi, and in later life Ciarán Hinds) from his passionate love affair with Amy (Odessa Young) in prewar Australia, to his time as a prisoner in Burma, to his later years as a surgeon.

The History Podcast: The Second Map

BBC Sounds
15 August

Friday 15 August marks the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Asia, and so the war as a whole: VJ Day. This new podcast from award-winning journalist Kavita Puri, creator of *Partition Voices*, tells the story of an often-overlooked aspect of the war – the hard-fought conflict between Britain and Japan. *The Second Map* includes testimonies from British, Indian and Japanese soldiers, as well as former prisoners of war and civilian internees, and interviews with Britons today who are uncovering their family members' experiences in the conflict.

Alice Roberts Weekends

Sky History2
16–17 and 23–24 August

This August, Sky History2 is paying tribute to one of Britain's most beloved TV presenters, Prof. Alice Roberts, with repeats of some of her most popular programmes including *Digging for Britain*, *Royal Autopsy* and *Britain's Most Historic Towns*.

BBC/RABBIT TRACK PICTURES/RVK STUDIOS/THE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY/SHEPHERD CONTENT/CBS STUDIOS/LILJA JÓNS | BBC/CURIO PICTURES/SONY PICTURES TELEVISION

NEXT MONTH

Our October issue goes on sale on **9 September**

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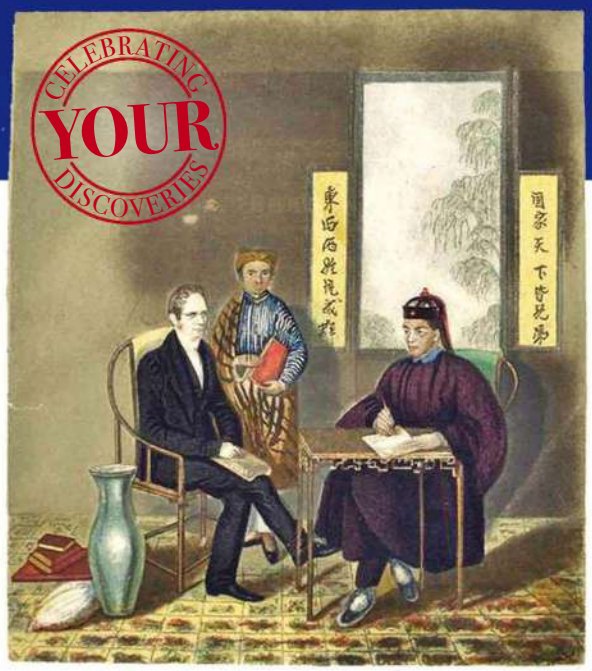
HOW TO UNCOVER YOUR ARISTOCRATIC ROOTS A professional genealogist's guide

GETTY IMAGES

'Walter Spread The Word Of God In China'

John Holliday has followed in the footsteps of a great great grandfather who worked tirelessly as a missionary and translated the Bible into Chinese. By **Gail Dixon**



Walter in conversation with his translator Choo-Tih-Lang

Walter Henry Medhurst was born in 1796 and grew up in the market town of Ross-on-Wye, Herefordshire. It was a far cry from tropical Asia, where he would spend most of his adulthood as a missionary.

A humanitarian, Walter pioneered the building of schools, churches, an orphanage and a hospital while spreading the word of God. He also helped to change history by translating the Bible into Chinese, creating an edition that was used by missionaries for roughly 70 years.

Walter is the great great grandfather of John Holliday, who has been so inspired by his forebear that he spent 10 years retracing his journeys across Asia. "I've known about Walter since I was a young child," John explains. "In later life, I looked for his biography but to my amazement no such book existed. I decided that writing it would become my mission."

The second edition of John's book *Mission to China: The Life of Walter Henry Medhurst* was released by Tallai Books in 2024, and is full of fascinating detail.

Walter studied for a time at St Paul's School in the City of London, then became an apprentice printer. After attending a missionary meeting in Bristol, he became fired with zeal to go to China, and in 1816 the London Missionary Society chose him to be one of its printers in the state of Malacca, Malaysia.

He set sail and called at Madras (now Chennai) in India, where in less than three months he met and married a widow named Elizabeth Braune. The couple went on to have 10 children, five of whom lived into adulthood.

On arrival in Malacca, Walter and Elizabeth learnt Malay and studied the Chinese language. He was ordained as a priest too when he was 22 years old.

"At that time, China banned outsiders, so the first 26 years of Walter's mission were spent among the Chinese diaspora in South-East Asia."

Walter also served as a missionary in Batavia (now Jakarta), Indonesia, where the family's first home was a bamboo hut. Malaria, cholera, smallpox and dysentery were rampant.

"In 1836, Walter bravely journeyed up the coast of China and called at various ports where he challenged the prohibition on foreigners. He was delighted to find outgoing people who were willing to interact."

Following the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, non-Chinese people were allowed into five ports so the Medhursts moved to Shanghai. Walter worked tirelessly, establishing the Shanghai Mission Station and opening a clinic in a house which treated patients for free. This developed into the city's first modern hospital.

Walter also collaborated with three other Western theologians to translate the Bible into Chinese. The 'Delegates' Version', as it was known, was published in 1850 and provided a gateway to Christianity for Chinese people.

John lives in Australia, and his pilgrimage to follow in Walter's life has taken him to India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and China. "The location that touched me the most was the William Charles Memorial Church and vicarage in Chennai where Walter married Elizabeth. I visited for a Sunday service, and was asked to say a prayer to the packed congregation."

Ill health forced Walter to return to London, where he died in 1857 aged 60. It's hard to quantify his remarkable achievement, but in 2018 the Chinese government revealed that there were about 44 million Christians in the country.

"Writing Walter's biography is one of the greatest achievements of my life. I hope that I have righted a wrong in which a person who helped to shape history had been forgotten."

Walter journeyed up China's coast and challenged the prohibition on foreigners

JOHN HOLLIDAY is retired and lives in Queensland, Australia. He has been researching his tree since 1967

WHO'S YOUR HERO?

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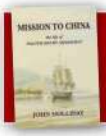

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